

THE NATURE OF  
AESTHETIC EVALUATION

A study in critical argument

by

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## Introduction

Philosophical reflection often begins not in wonder at anything in the world, but rather in wonder at what other people say about things in the world. Such was the genesis of this inquiry into the logical foundations of the criticism of art. Art criticism is not one of the more abstruse forms of literature. Most critical writing can be easily understood by any interested person of sound mind and even mediocre education. It could be read throughout a lifetime without arousing any suspicion of the logical problems which philosophical investigations into its nature have raised. But now that these problems have been raised, until they are settled the competence of critics to provide trustworthy judgements of the value of works of art remains in doubt. It seems to me that what philosophers have said about criticism during the course of their attempts to resolve these problems is so unsatisfactory that the need to re-examine the logical structure of critical discourse is urgent.

As readers of contemporary philosophy are well aware, the scrutiny of value judgements in recent years has left their function uncertain and their logical status in dispute. The embarrassing lack of strict logical connections between value statements and other statements adduced to support them has

been revealed, and the impossibility of empirically verifying statements of value has also been pointed out. These disclosures lead to the repudiation of the critic's claim to competence in assessing the artistic merit of works of art. Scepticism regarding the logical efficacy of argument about value led Carnap to equate the value judgement with a "series of empty words."<sup>1</sup> Dissenting from this extreme view, other writers have attempted to salvage value statements by assigning to them duties less onerous than the traditional one of asserting judgements. They have variously held that they express the speaker's emotion, feeling, or attitude, that they arouse the emotions or feelings of others, or determine their attitudes, or that they make recommendations or issue commands.

Acceptance of any of these views entails a drastic revision of the traditional conception of the function of criticism. The emasculated condition in which the aesthetic judgement has survived philosophical analysis discourages the view that the evaluation of works of art is a legitimate aim of criticism. For if it is the case that critical statements make no assertion about the works they pretend to be about, but serve some quite different purpose, then it would be sensible no longer to look to criticism for reliable information about the aesthetic value of works of art.

The deposition of critics from their position as judges of aesthetic merit would seem an arbitrary act to most readers of critical literature. They may question the competence of certain critics, and at times disagree with the evaluations of

the critics in whose judgement they have most confidence; but the suggestions that all critics are equally incompetent to pronounce judgement on the aesthetic value of works of art, and that logically speaking any evaluation can make as good a claim to acceptance as any other, would strike them as remarkably sophisticated, paradoxical, and bewildering. But if when critics begin to speak of value they cease to talk about works of art and begin to express their feelings, or to deliver rhetoric, or to issue prescriptions or commands, or to do something else, and if the arguments they use when discussing the aesthetic value of works of art are inherently alogical, then these suggestions must be taken as correctly describing the critical situation.

Most critics of art, past and present, have considered evaluation an important part of their work. Some of these have been of the opinion that the chief end of their professional activity is to arrive at a verdict about the aesthetic value of the works they consider. There have been some dissenters, critics who have disclaimed being judges, arguing that evaluation is not a legitimate critical assignment.<sup>2</sup> Writers working on the boundaries of criticism and scholarship, of criticism and science, of criticism and pedagogy have stressed the importance of such non-evaluative work as interpretation, dating, sociological and psychological explanation, the education of taste, the tracing of sources and influences, the placing of individual works within an artistic tradition, and so on. There is a great body of literature on

art which does not have the aesthetic judgement of the works discussed as its purpose. The propriety of calling this literature 'critical' is not questioned here. Throughout this thesis, however, the term 'criticism' will be used in a narrow sense to refer to that kind of writing about art whose principal aim is aesthetic evaluation. And the terms 'critical argument' and 'critical discourse' will be used to refer to those discussions of art which culminate in aesthetic judgements. It is critical writing of this kind that is relevant to a consideration of the philosophic issues raised by theories of value.

Since many critics assume their right and responsibility to commit themselves to judgements of value, and since many readers look to these critics for expert commentary on the aesthetic value of works of art, doubts about the logical status of the aesthetic judgement are from a philosophical point of view most unsatisfactory. Critics pretend to make assertions about the aesthetic value of works of art, and to defend these statements by reasoned argument. Readers of criticism suppose that they are being provided with information about the value of works of art, and that at least some of the arguments adduced to support the statements purveying this information are cogent. Some of the philosophers whose views are to be considered here claim that the statements in question do not fulfill their intended function but serve some quite different purpose, and that the arguments in question are constitutionally incapable of supporting the kind of statement that they are expected to

support. This situation is intellectually intolerable. If critics are not doing what they seem to be doing, if they are merely expressing their feelings about works of art, or declaring their attitudes towards them, or doing yet something else, then they should drop the pretense of judging their value. And if readers of criticism are merely having their emotion aroused, or are merely being commanded, or are having something else done to them, then they should be relieved of the illusion that they are being provided with information about the aesthetic value of works of art. If, on the other hand, these philosophers are wrong about what takes place in criticism, then they should be corrected.

In my opinion, it is the philosophers who are wrong. In so far as the current philosophical controversy about value concerns the aesthetic judgement, it seems to me to be the product of a series of closely related misunderstandings of the method and purpose of judging works of art. These misunderstandings have generated the logical problems which the theories to be controverted here have been designed to resolve. It is not surprising that theories inspired by misunderstandings have misconstrued the logical character of critical discourse. When the root error of these misunderstandings has been exposed and corrected, it may be expected that a fresh examination of critical argument will yield a more accurate conception of its logical structure.

The error that vitiates much of the writing about criticism with which I am familiar may be called false dichotomy. To

dichotomize is to divide into two mutually exclusive classes. The operation can be very useful in various sorts of analyses, provided that what is dichotomized actually consists of two distinct kinds. If a homogenous class is arbitrarily divided, any analysis based upon the groundless division will almost certainly provide a false account of what it purports to explain. The infection of theory of value at several levels by false dichotomy is largely responsible for the failure of logicians to provide an effectual analysis of critical argument.

Philosophical tradition distinguishes between practical and theoretical discourse. The difference between them can be expressed in terms of purpose. The purpose of practical discourse is to arrive at a decision as to what ought to be done, and the aim of its judgements is to promote certain actions and to discourage others. The purpose of theoretical discourse is to reach an understanding of phenomena, and the aim of its judgements is to provide knowledge. Moral argument is generally (but not invariably) considered to typify practical discourse; and natural science provides the characteristic example of theoretical discourse. Generalizations are made about the logical peculiarities of these two types of discourse, for instance, about the possibility and method of verifying the judgements of each; and therefore the classification of any kind of argument as theoretical or practical will have a bearing on the description that is given of its logical characteristics. The distinction between theoretical discourse and practical discourse thus represents a dichotomy which is thought to have



pragmatic value for the analysis of certain subject matters. Neither the legitimacy nor the usefulness of this division of realms of discourse, nor the conventional classification of ethics and the natural sciences, are brought into question here. What I do want to point out is that the description of the two classes, practical and theoretical discourse, has been based upon a restricted selection of subject matters, viz. ethics and empirical science. Therefore, any subject matter not exclusively characterized by the defining marks of either ethics or empirical science is likely to be misconstrued through being forced for the purpose of analysis into either one or the other of the two classes provided. Such has been the fate of critical discourse.

The subsequent examination of value theories will uncover evidence of the dichotomizing error in the assumption that critical argument must be classified as either practical or as theoretical discourse. It is assumed that critical judgements must either perform the same kind of practical function as do moral judgements, or that they must serve the same kind of theoretical purpose as do scientific judgements. The analyst then works with one or the other of two different hypotheses, depending upon which alternative he has accepted. Either he attempts to describe the logic of critical discourse as argument designed for the practical purpose of guiding choices, or he attempts to show how it can be interpreted as satisfying the standards of theoretical discourse to which scientific judgements appeal for justification. Both hypotheses are inadequate and

lead to misconceptions of the logical structure of critical argument. This is the point which I argue in the first chapter. There I try to show that critical argument does not fit into either one or the other of the mutually exclusive classes which the dichotomy between practical discourse and theoretical discourse provides. The purpose of critical discourse is not the same as the purpose generally assigned to either practical or theoretical discourse. It combines the purpose of both of these, and it shares some of the logical characteristics of both. But it also exhibits other logical characteristics peculiar to itself. Therefore in Chapter I I urge the importance of approaching criticism as a unique mode of discourse, without assuming the identity of its purpose nor of its logical character with the purpose and logical character of any other kind of argument.

The alternative approach is a primary source of the misconstructions put upon critical discourse. Theorists who assume that criticism is a form of practical discourse never trouble to examine any critical arguments whatsoever. They suppose that if they analyse moral argument, the prototype of practical discourse, then their analyses will serve equally well to explain critical argument. The ineptness of their accounts of critical argument shows that their confidence is not well founded. Theorists who assume that criticism is a form of theoretical discourse attempt to show how critical argument can be interpreted as conforming to the rules of scientific argument. Their assumption that the logical



justification of arguments of whatever kind depends upon their satisfying the rules of inference recognized in natural science raises quite unnecessary questions about the cogency of critical argument which their theories never satisfactorily answer. In this thesis an attempt is made to reach a better understanding of criticism by avoiding these mistakes. The logical homogeneity of moral and critical discourse is not assumed; rather, contrary to standard philosophical procedure, some critical arguments are actually examined in order to discover how they are constructed. Nor is it assumed here that the standards of logical justification recognized in natural science are the only legitimate standards of cogent reasoning. The main endeavour of the thesis is to study critical discourse in order to see whether it will yield its own standards by which to distinguish cogent critical arguments from those which fail to justify the judgements which they assert.

Another case of false dichotomy is exposed in Chapter 2. There I discuss the misguided conception of the work of art as being composed of a physical object and an aesthetic object. This is a very misleading distinction upon which to ground a theory of value judgements. From that point of view (i.e. the critic's) from which works of art must be regarded in order to understand criticism of them, each work constitutes a single object, being a physical entity having a certain value. The widely held view that each work of art is really two objects, a material object and a value object, has had a pernicious effect upon theory of criticism, and the

misunderstandings upon which this deceptive notion is based must be eradicated.

Since the assault to be made upon this view later will undoubtedly encounter opposition, perhaps I should here anticipate a concession which, if not overlooked, may make the argument of Chapter 2 more palatable. It may be admitted that the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy might conceivably prove itself useful for certain aesthetic inquiries. It might, for instance, have pragmatic value for a psychological investigation of aesthetic experience; the psychologist might find it expedient at times to describe a work of art as a purely physical object of perception and at other times as an experienced object characterized by value. My argument against the dichotomy has no bearing upon investigations of that kind. It is directed solely against postulating or assuming the dichotomy in inquiries into the logic of critical discourse. The nature of the descriptions of works of art given by psychologists must be determined by the exigencies of their own science and by the special problems which they are trying to solve. What I oppose is the expectation that the logical character of critical remarks can be correctly described by an analysis based upon the distinction between physical object and aesthetic object.

Once this division of works of art has been accomplished, a distinction between the physical features and the value features of works of art ensues. The heedless preservation of this distinction indicates that no consideration has been

given to the fact that in a work of art no 'value feature' can exist independently of a 'physical feature', and no 'physical feature' can exist without at the same time being a 'value feature'. These widely used terms, 'physical feature' and 'value feature', are fatally misleading, for they encourage the generally accepted but false notion that there are two logically distinct kinds of critical remarks corresponding to the two kinds of features. This metaphysical splitting of the work of art into two kinds of objects, and its features into two different kinds, is therefore dangerous, because it misrepresents the kind of thing that critics are writing about. The purpose of Chapter 2, then, is to expose and correct this false dichotomy by way of a propaedeutic to a study of critical language.

Theorists who draw this arbitrary distinction between kinds of features quite consistently extend it to the words predicated of works of art in criticism. Two classes of critical terms, that of 'descriptive' terms and that of 'value' terms, taken to be logically disparate, emerge from their faulty analysis. (This conventional distinction between terms may also, of course, be utilized in discussions which contain no explicit reference to the corresponding distinction between features.) The study in critical semantics of Chapter 3 reveals that no critical predicate, when it is read in context and its full implications are considered, can be properly regarded as either purely descriptive or as purely evaluative. There certainly are words in critical use whose

function is primarily descriptive and others whose function is primarily evaluative. But these differences in the relative degrees of the descriptive and the evaluative force of the various predicates used in a critical argument do not warrant their being isolated from one another by a rigid logical distinction which is wholly insensitive to the ambiguities of critical language.

The main purpose of Chapter 3 is to break down this dichotomy and to provide an alternative method of construing critical terms which takes into account the dual function of description and evaluation which they all actually perform in critical argument. The assertions made about a work of art within a single argument are clearly intended to contain predicates which have some logical connection with one another. So long as these predicates are cut off from one another by being assigned to one or the other of two mutually exclusive classes, there is no hope of discovering what the nature of this logical connection may be.

The distinction between descriptive statements and value statements is based upon the arbitrary division of critical predicates into two classes. Once it is accepted that critical remarks are of two distinct kinds, 'descriptive' and 'evaluative', difficulties of great magnitude about their relationship arise. Having unwisely admitted distinctions between the physical object and the aesthetic object, between physical features and value features, between descriptive terms and evaluative terms, a distinction between descriptive

statements and value statements of course follows; and then it is impossible to understand how the statements within a critical argument are connected. What are taken to be 'value statements' are supposed not to be logically connected with what are called 'descriptive statements', and are either dismissed as gratuitous or defended within an elaborate theory as performing some hitherto unsuspected function.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the abolition from theory of criticism of the generally acknowledged distinction between statements of fact and statements of value. It becomes evident during that discussion that much of the contemporary controversy about the value judgement arises directly from this false dichotomy. I also try to show in that chapter that certain recent, widely acclaimed accounts of the relation between the statements of evaluative discourse must be condemned as contributing nothing but confusion to theory of criticism. The particular logical difficulties which these theories are supposed to be capable of resolving do not inhere in critical argument at all, but are the result of the philosophers' mistake about the kind of statements that are made by critics.

A correct understanding of the logical import of critical statements is prerequisite to an explanation of their logical relations. Certain prevalent misconceptions of the purpose and nature of critical assertion having been exposed by the end of Chapter 4, the field is cleared of a number of theories which have circulated false accounts of critical discourse. In Chapter 5 an attempt is made to describe the logical

structure of critical argument by setting forth certain conditions upon which the inferences made from statement to statement within a work of criticism depend. I argue there that a statement in which a critical judgement of value is asserted is derived from other statements about the work of art according to specifiable logical rules by reference to which critical arguments which are cogent can be distinguished from those which are not. The main intention of Chapter 5, then, is to show that standards of sound critical argument can be formulated, and that therefore the current scepticism about the possibility of logically justifying any critical judgement is unwarranted.

The analysis of critical argument introduces the subject of criteria of value. In Chapter 6 I try to determine the logical character of the criteria upon which critical judgements are grounded by discovering how they come to be formulated and how they are used in evaluative criticism. The main contention of this chapter is that criteria of value are logically adequate to support objective aesthetic judgements of works of art. A brief consideration of the relation between criteria of value and aesthetic theory completes the examination of the logic of critical discourse.

The argument of this thesis is consistently antagonistic toward the subjectivist view of aesthetic judgements. It seems to me that a subjectivist bias inevitably misdirects inquiries into the logic of value discourse. Refusing to



take seriously the critic's intention of stating something about a work of art when he formulates his judgement of it, the subjectivist proceeds to explain how the assertion of a value judgement performs some other quite different function. The subjectivist view is attractive, because it answers easily certain questions about aesthetic evaluation which are hard to answer from any other standpoint. It can show, for instance, how it is that two critics can make apparently incompatible assertions about the value of a work of art without logically contradicting one another. And it can dispose of all questions about the truth, correctness, or justification of value judgements by showing that these notions are irrelevant, since statements of value judgements do not really refer to the works of art that they pretend to be about. What seems unsatisfactory about these facile solutions to difficult problems is that they depend upon a conception of critical remarks quite different from that which critics or their readers presumably hold. It is possible that critics have been mistaken in supposing that when they stated their aesthetic evaluations they were making assertions about works of art. And perhaps readers of evaluative criticism have also been wrong in thinking that they were being told something about works of art by critics. But the ubiquity and persistence of such errors seem too astonishing a fact to be accepted unless the problems in question cannot be solved on the basis of some view more in accord with what most people have always supposed critical writing to be about.

There are other consequences of the subjectivist view no less remarkable for the disparity between them and what appears to be actually the case with value judgements. It is generally supposed that a critical judgement may be mistaken, and mistaken in the sense that the wrong evaluation is put upon a work of art. It is also supposed that when two critics make assertions about the value of the same work of art their statements might conceivably be in contradiction, i.e. that their statements might be incompatible in the sense that no one could assent to both statements without committing a logical error. Both of these common suppositions are denied by the primitive form of subjectivism which holds that the assertion of a value judgement is equivalent to the assertion that the critic has a certain feeling, of approval or disapproval, toward the work.<sup>3</sup> On this view, a critical judgement could be wrong only in the sense of misrepresenting the critic's feeling; there is no question of its being wrong about the work of art, because it is not about the work of art. For the same reason, the apparently contradictory statements of several critics can never really be contradictory; so long as they both give a correct report of the critics' feelings, they both may be given assent however incompatible they would be if actually made about the work of art. Presumably when critics argue about the value of a work of art they suppose that they are trying to justify their aesthetic judgements, to defend or to support the statements that they have made about the work's value. And readers of



criticism also suppose that critics are giving them reasons for accepting as correct certain statements about the value of works of art. But this notion is also discounted by the subjectivist who rejects the question of whether what the critic asserts about a work of art is correct or not in favour of the question of whether or not what the critic asserts is true to his own feeling about the work.

It would appear that critical discourse raises interesting logical questions about how aesthetic judgements are justified or supported or defended. But when critical discourse is investigated from a subjectivist standpoint, all such logical questions can be suppressed in favour of psychological questions about why the critic happens to have the feelings he does and about the methods he might use to arouse similar feelings in his readers. This direction of interest is in accord with the view that the notion of correctness relevant to statements of value judgements applies only to the conformity of the critic's statements to his own feelings. But it is certainly not in accord with the critic's evident intention of showing that the work of art does actually have the value that he judges it to have, nor with most readers' understanding that they are being offered expert commentary on a work of art and not introspective reports on the critic's emotional experiences.

My thesis is that critical judgements can be objective. The statements in which some aesthetic evaluations are asserted are about works of art and do not always, as philosophers

now often suppose, merely pretend to be about them. Such statements are derived from others according to certain principles of inference which can be discovered by a close study of critical argument. It is therefore possible to distinguish a critical argument that is cogent from one that is not. And since it is possible to decide whether the statements from which a critical judgement is derived are correct or not, it is also possible to decide whether or not the judgement is correct. Subjective critical judgements are also sometimes made; these are assertions apparently about the value of works of art which the most careful inspection of these works would serve neither to confirm nor refute. This eventuality indicates that the subjective/objective distinction ought to be drawn within critical discourse itself and not be posited to distinguish criticism from other kinds of discourse.

It is generally supposed, and not without reason, that some critical remarks are subjective, having no grounds other than the critic's personal preference, his feeling or emotion, and that other critical statements are objective, providing potentially reliable information about works of art themselves. It is important to retain this distinction within criticism, and to try to discover the logical features which distinguish critical arguments yielding objective judgements from those yielding subjective ones. It is uninformative and, furthermore, misleading to posit the distinction as differentiating criticism from quite different kinds of discourse, say that of empirical science. Using the subjective/objective dichotomy

to contrast criticism with objective modes of discourse implies that all critical judgements are subjective, and this is not so. This faulty classification obscures the distinguishing features of two quite different kinds of critical discussion: that which consists of subjective remarks recording personal preferences, emotions, feelings, or attitudes, and that which contains assertions about the value of works of art grounded in the features of the works discussed and supported by reasoned argument.

It is by no means uncommon to assume that the standards of meaningful assertion and of cogent reasoning recognized in natural science constitute the only legitimate standards by reference to which statements can be logically justified. Assuming this, it will be supposed that the problem of showing that critical judgements can be objective and reliable, as the judgements of natural science can be, is equivalent to showing that critical assertion and inference conform to the same rules of assertion and inference as govern scientific argument. The differences between critical and scientific discourse are taken to be superficial and of no logical consequence. It is implied or claimed that when criticism is properly understood, its judgements will be seen to be genuine empirical propositions, amenable to the same tests of verification as are the judgements of natural science. But critical judgements are not empirical propositions, and attempts to analyse critical discourse on the assumption that they are succeed only in arousing the suspicion that critical

arguments are logically inadequate to support the judgements that they are supposed to support. Critical argument does not satisfy the logical requirements of scientific discourse. Not only is it futile to try to show that it does, but it is unnecessary. For the integrity of a critical argument, its ability to justify logically an aesthetic judgement, need not depend upon its satisfying scientific standards of assertion and inference. Criticism has its own standards of sound argument to satisfy, and the business of the logician is to find out what these are.

This can be done only by examining arguments to be found in critical literature. But theorists have been strangely reluctant to consider any of the arguments actually advanced by critics in support of their judgements. They have preferred to analyse arguments invented by themselves, or rather such fragments of hypothetical arguments as 'This is good', 'This is beautiful', and the like. This habit of symbolizing critical arguments by simplified, conventional models of its judgements results in a gross misrepresentation of what critics are saying. Thus the elegance achieved by a high degree of abstraction from the variety and complexity of actual criticism is very costly in terms of relevance. Too often the criticism of art has served the philosopher merely as an occasion for speculation about general problems of axiology, or as a source of illustrations (usually fictional) to support theories based upon studies of moral evaluation. This approach has contributed nothing toward an understanding

of the logical character of critical discourse itself. In this study in critical argument I shall attempt to keep what critics actually write about works of art in constant focus.

## Chapter I

### Practical, Theoretical, and Critical Discourse

A clear conception of the purpose of critical discourse is prerequisite to an analysis of its logical structure. Even the specific questions which an inquiry such as this tries to answer are dictated by the view that is taken of what critics accomplish by writing about works of art. If it is held that certain critical remarks are assertions about the value of works of art, then questions arise about how to decide which of these assertions are correct and which mistaken. If it is held, on the other hand, that the purpose of these same remarks is to influence readers in some way, the question of how to decide whether the remarks assert what is true of the work is neglected in favour of questions about the way in which they exert their influence. If the logician supposes that criticism is theoretically capable of showing what is the case concerning the value of the works discussed, he will ask what conditions a critic's argument must satisfy in order to justify a reader's acceptance of the critic's statements. But if he supposes that the object of criticism

is to elicit a response of a certain kind from readers, he will ask about the techniques actually used by critics to accomplish this rhetorical purpose. It is apparent that an inquiry starting from one of these preconceptions of critical discourse will arrive at conclusions of a quite different kind than will an inquiry which takes the other as its point of departure.

In accordance with the traditional philosophic distinction between kinds of discourse, these alternative conceptions of critical discourse may be termed theoretical and practical. Critical literature will be read on a theoretical view as providing information of some kind about works of art. On a practical view it will be interpreted as in some way influencing the choices of readers. It might be supposed that neither one of these views could be justifiably adopted until the end of the inquiry. But this is not so. Before an explanation can be given of how critical arguments are constructed, the purpose for which they are constructed must be understood: the philosopher cannot begin to explain how criticism is done until he has made up his mind about what critics are trying to do.

Out of deference to this rule of procedure, Nowell-Smith begins his recent inquiry into the logic of moral discourse by arguing that ethics is properly a form of practical discourse.<sup>1</sup> He attributes the alleged errors of a number of philosophers to their mistaken attempts to analyse moral argument as if it had the same goal (knowledge) as does theoretical science.<sup>2</sup>



Whether or not Nowell-Smith's conception of the goal of moral discourse is accepted, his book well illustrates the importance of coming to a decision about the purpose of the kind of discourse investigated before attempting to explain its logical structure. The broad distinction he draws between theoretical and practical science is fine enough for this discussion, and the definitions he gives of the two kinds of science will serve here as a point of departure. The purpose of a theoretical science, he says, "is to enable us to understand the nature of things,"<sup>3</sup> and of a practical science to provide "answers to practical questions, of which the most important are 'What shall I do?' and 'What ought I to do?'"<sup>4</sup> Answers to the questions raised in theoretical science "take the form of statements, descriptions, generalizations, explanations, and laws."<sup>5</sup> Answers to the questions raised in practical discourse "are decisions, resolutions, expressions of intention... an order, injunction, or piece of advice, a sentence in the form 'Do such and such'."<sup>6</sup>

"The central activities for which moral language is used are choosing and advising others to choose."<sup>7</sup> This statement of purpose is Nowell-Smith's ground for classifying moral argument as practical discourse. Now the question arises as to what kind of science the criticism of art is. Would it be correct to say that the central activities for which critical language is used are choosing and advising others to choose? It would not seem at all strange to maintain such a view. And the widespread practise of grouping moral statements and



critical statements together as 'value statements' and contrasting these with the descriptive (factual) statements of theoretical science seems to imply this view. When criticism is construed as a practical science, the critic's function is taken to be the answering of such questions as, 'Is this play worth the time and expense entailed by attending its performance?' and 'Should I buy this painting or use the money to attend the festival at Salzburg?' It seems clear that much critical writing, particularly of the kind published in newspaper reviews, is intended to fulfill this purpose of helping the reader to decide whether or not to buy certain works of art and whether or not to attend certain performances or exhibitions. But whether or not the giving of such practical advice is the "central activity," the ultimate goal in terms of which all critical discourse is to be understood, is another matter.

And it appears that much critical writing does not have such a practical end in view. Some criticism is written about performances that will never be repeated, and still more is read by people who have no intention of making first hand acquaintance with the works discussed. It is only on a very trivial reading of much serious criticism of works of high repute that one would say that the critics' main purpose was to advise people to read those works, or to look at them, or to listen to them. The value of Faust and of the Sistine Ceiling and of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is so well established (i.e. generally accepted) that anyone who is interested

in such matters and even slightly informed about them does not need the recommendations of a critic to decide that they are worth his time. Critical studies of these works by Buchwald and Wölffin and Hoffman were not written in order to advise the reader what he ought to do about them. Rather they are all attempts to show by critical analysis by what means the artists created works of exceptional value. This kind of criticism would appear to belong with theoretical discourse, the purpose of which, according to Nowell-Smith, "is to enable us to understand the nature of things."

The short, often hastily written, reviews of contemporary works, designed to influence the reader's attitude toward the works and his choices between them, and the extended analyses of works of established reputation, intended to increase his understanding and deepen his appreciation of them, do not together exhaust the field of critical writing. Stuart Gilbert's study of Ulysses was assuredly intended both to make a difficult and much misunderstood novel intelligible and to alter the public's unfavourable attitude toward it by encouraging an informed reading of the book. Such a work, and the literature of criticism provides numerous examples, is attempting to fulfill both a theoretical and a practical function in some vague sense of these terms which includes, on the one hand, explanation and, on the other, recommendation. But does it fulfill either a theoretical or practical function in Nowell-Smith's sense of the terms, which is, I think, the generally accepted one? It seems to me that if the defining

characteristics of theoretical and practical sciences are derived, as they are, from considerations of the goals and procedures of pure and empirical science and of ethics, criticism will be found not to fit very comfortably into either class. If I am right about this, the function of critical terms, the nature of critical statements, and the logic of critical argument may be expected to differ from the function, nature, and logic of the terms, statements, and arguments of both pure and empirical science and of ethics. If these expected differences are actually present, theories of aesthetic evaluation which construe critical terms, statements, and arguments as being logically identical with the terms, statements, and arguments of either natural science or ethics are bound to overlook the peculiarities of critical discourse and accordingly to fail to understand it.

Since it is most generally held that criticism is a form of practical discourse, I shall be concerned here with distinguishing critical discourse and moral discourse in terms of purpose. In so far as moral discourse is taken to be representative of practical science, I wish to show that criticism does not belong in the category of practical discourse. I shall try to repudiate the claim, implied or stated in certain theories to be examined, that critical argument and moral argument attempt to answer the same kind of question. But I shall not be arguing against the widespread view that criticism of art can and sometimes does fulfill a practical function. There is little doubt that a critic may affect his readers'

feelings or attitudes toward a work and also offer such advice as will influence the choices that they must sometimes make concerning works of art. A critic's remarks may also be instrumental in improving a performer's technique; and a conductor or a choreographer or a stage manager may find critical analyses of musical or dramatic works very useful. These and many other possible events give sufficient reason for accepting the common notion that critical writing may serve some practical purpose. This notion is as harmless as it is vague, and there is no sensible objection to be made against it. But it has been made the basis of certain theories of value discourse which are far from harmless, and against these serious objections will be brought in this chapter.

There is a crucial difference between the sense of 'practical' that is admitted here as correctly describing critical discourse and the sense of the term as understood by the theorists whose views are to be discussed. The common sense view that a work of criticism may have practical effects of one kind or another leaves room for a question about the truth or falsity of what the critic writes. It admits that a critic may affect his readers' feelings or attitudes, but also shows an interest in whether the persons so affected have been given correct information about the work's value. It is not supposed on this view that critical discourse can be fully explained by a study of critical rhetoric. For after all questions about the emotive or persuasive power of critical language have been answered, logical questions about how

aesthetic evaluations are justified remain. No attempt to answer these questions is made by philosophers who construe criticism as a form of practical discourse in the technical sense of that term. They are content to show merely in what way critics do exert the influence necessary to accomplish their practical purpose. When this extremely restricted notion of critical purpose is adopted as the controlling conception of the inquiry, most of the questions about criticism that one might expect to interest the logician are ignored. Therefore it seems to me important to show that critical discourse is not primarily or essentially 'practical' in the generally accepted philosophic sense of that word.

But neither is criticism strictly a 'theoretical' subject. It does not exhibit a number of those defining characteristics of theoretical discourse peculiar to natural science, and its concern with the value of things is alone sufficient to distinguish it from non-normative inquiries into phenomena. The merit of the theoretical view is that it takes seriously the critic's claim to make assertions about the value of works of art, thereby directing the inquiry into the logic of the arguments offered to support such statements. The theoretical view is dangerous when it leads those who hold it to suppose that criticism should conform to the logical pattern of scientific discourse. Finding that critical statements do not satisfy certain standards against which empirical statements are tested, and that inferences within critical argument are not made according to the rules to which the inferences of

exact science are expected to conform, the philosopher may conclude that as logical argument criticism is congenitally defective. This result can be prevented by avoiding dogmatism about the relative logical merits of different types of discourse. There are certain logical differences between scientific discourse and critical discourse, and these will be discussed later in the thesis whenever it is found that confusion about them has been the cause of misunderstanding the logical structure of critical discourse itself. Before proceeding so far, however, the inadequacy of the practical view of criticism as a hypothesis for analysing critical argument must be shown.

First it is necessary to understand how a statement by statement analysis of a critical argument would be conducted according to the several specific forms of the practical view now current in philosophy. If a passage of criticism is understood to aim at arousing a certain emotion or feeling about the work discussed, one or several of its statements will be considered as indicating what emotion or feeling the reader is to experience and the others as rhetorical devices for exciting this emotion or feeling.<sup>8</sup> Or if criticism is taken to be a device for invoking certain attitudes, then one or several of its statements may be taken as expressing the attitude which the rest of the statements, offered as reasons, are calculated to invoke.<sup>9</sup> If criticism is construed as a way of giving advice, one or several of the statements will be understood as prescribing what action is to be taken in regard



to the work, or at least as providing grounds for inferring an imperative, and the remainder as at once describing the work and setting forth the standards by which all other works of a similar kind are to be judged.<sup>10</sup>

On all of these views the critic is taken to be a man primarily concerned with influencing behaviour, whether by arousing feeling, determining attitudes, or by offering advice. This version of the critic's function is plausible. To take an example, it does seem that F. R. Leavis's purpose in calling Dickens's Hard Times a "masterpiece"<sup>11</sup> is to encourage some people to read the book and others, who have already read it and dismissed it as being beneath critical notice, to read it again. There seems to be nothing wrong with saying that Leavis's criticism is intended to arouse in his readers a feeling of admiration for the novel, or to induce a favourable attitude toward it, or that he is advising readers that Hard Times merits serious study. There is, as I have already admitted, little doubt that many essays in criticism have the effect of promoting or discouraging commerce with the works discussed, and that their authors intend them to have such an effect. Whether there are exceptions to this generalization about the function of criticism is a question that need not be argued here. The decisive question is whether the view of criticism as being essentially practical in intention and effect, even if right as far as it goes, can provide an adequate hypothesis for an analysis of the logical structure of critical discourse. Or must the logician allow

for the apparent fact that critics do make statements about the value of works of art and do attempt to justify these statements by argument? The problem can be put concretely by asking whether a practical interpretation of criticism or one which takes into account the critic's claim to offer information about the value of a work of art provides the most illuminating answer to the question, 'Why did Leavis call Hard Times a "masterpiece"?'

One answer worth considering, which is consistent with the practical view of criticism, is: 'Because he is prescribing, attempting to influence the behaviour of readers through affecting their feelings or attitudes, and "masterpiece," being a potent item in the arsenal of critical rhetoric, is well suited to the job'. An alternative answer, also consistent with the practical view of criticism, would be: 'Because he is answering the question he supposes readers of literary criticism to be asking, namely, "What should I do, i.e., read?"'. The third, quite different way of answering the question, attributable to reading critical works as arguments offered in support of aesthetic evaluations, is: 'Because of all the reasons given in his discussion of the book'. No two of these answers are mutually exclusive, and therefore perhaps they are all admissible as providing the different kinds of information appropriate to the several interpretations that can be put upon the question, 'Why did Leavis call Hard Times a "masterpiece"?' What must be decided now is which interpretation provides the most fruitful conception



for investigating the logical relations between the statements of Leavis's argument.

The view that Leavis calls Hard Times a "masterpiece" in order to invoke a certain feeling or attitude in the reader implies the possibility of grouping all the statements of the critical essay into one or the other of two classes. In one class will be the statements that express the author's feeling or attitude, and in the other the statements which are calculated to invoke this same feeling or attitude in the reader. This classification accords with the distinction, accepted by those who hold the emotive or attitude theory, between prescriptive and descriptive propositions. Indeed, it is merely another way of putting the distinction. As I shall try to show in Chapter 4, the classifying must be done in a very arbitrary manner, because the distinction corresponds to no genuine difference between critical remarks. Searching for statements which exhibit the defining characteristics of one class and are at the same time devoid of those of the other, one is at a loss to know where to put such a remark as, "In fact, by texture, imaginative mode, symbolic method, and the resulting concentration, Hard Times affects us as belonging with formally poetic works."<sup>12</sup> Despite this recalcitrance of the critic's prose to the forms logicians would impose upon it, I shall suggest, for the sake of the argument, candidates for the two classes. Possible examples of statements which would be taken as expressing Leavis's feeling or attitude toward the book are: "Actually, the Dickensian vitality is there, in its

varied characteristic modes, which have the more force because they are free of redundancy: the creative exuberance is controlled by a profound inspiration."<sup>13</sup> "But Dickens's art, while remaining that of the great popular entertainer, has in Hard Times, as he renders his full critical vision, a stamina, a flexibility combined with consistency, and a depth that he seems to have had little credit for."<sup>14</sup> And the following remarks might be taken as calculated to invoke the same feeling or attitude in the reader, "by calling attention," as A. J. Ayer says, "to certain features of the work under review":<sup>15</sup> "The philosophy is represented by Thomas Gradgrind, Esquire, Member of Parliament for Coketown, who has brought up his children on the lines of the experiment recorded by John Stuart Mill as carried out on himself."<sup>16</sup> "Bitzer, the model pupil, on the button's being pressed, promptly vomits up the genuine article, 'Quadruped, Graminivorous, etc.; and 'Now, girl number twenty, you know what a horse is'."<sup>17</sup> Since these two remarks, which do call attention to certain features of the work, namely a character and a scene, seem not to be highly charged with evocative power, I may add a third: "The irony, pungent enough locally, is richly developed in the subsequent action."<sup>18</sup> This last remark seems better calculated to excite a feeling or determine an attitude, but it is indistinguishable in kind from the members of the other class.

The difficulty of even distinguishing the statements of a critical argument on the lines indicated by an emotive or an attitudinal theory diminishes confidence in the theory's

ability to explain the connection between them. Two more related difficulties follow. Apart from the ambiguous status of many remarks which leaves their proper classification a matter of profound doubt, there are yet other statements which clearly do not belong in either of the classes provided by the theory: "At the opening of the book Sissy establishes the essential distinction between Gradgrind and Bounderby."<sup>19</sup> "And Mr. Sleary proceeds to explain that Sissy's truant father is certainly dead because his performing dog, who would never have deserted him living, has come back to the Horse-riding."<sup>20</sup> Surely neither of these statements express any special feeling or attitude entertained by Leavis. Nor are they designed to evoke any specifiable feeling or attitude in the reader. What is to be done with them? Apparently they must be dismissed as beyond the competence of the analysis. Other statements make even greater trouble. Not only are they unaccountable on the hypothesis being considered, they are clearly at variance with the purpose ascribed to the essay by the prescriptive theory of value discourse: "Criticism, of course, has its points to make against Hard Times."<sup>21</sup> "Again, his attitude to Trade Unionism is not the only expression of a lack of political understanding."<sup>22</sup> These remarks are ill suited to the end of inciting the feeling or attitude appropriate to a "masterpiece." Either they must be written off as inadvertent, or the hypothesis that was supposed to account for them must be altered.

This is not the end of the disappointments involved in

reading Leavis's essay as being essentially practical in intention and effect. Anyone who answers the question 'Why did Leavis call Hard Times a "masterpiece"?' by saying, 'Because he is attempting to influence the behaviour of readers through affecting their feelings or attitudes' must be content to leave Leavis's own feeling or attitude toward the novel unexplained. And, of course, on such a reading of the essay Leavis's calling Hard Times a "masterpiece" does and must remain wholly inexplicable. For any statements that might be taken as accounting for the judgement will be assessed solely for their ability to affect the feelings or attitudes of the critic's readers. "What are accounted reasons for our [aesthetic] judgements," Ayer says, "are reasons only in the sense that they determine attitudes."<sup>23</sup> Thus all hope of finding within the argument reasons for the judgement must, on this view, be given up. This is an implication which Ayer, for one, is willing to accept: he would relegate the question of why Leavis calls Hard Times a "masterpiece" to the psychologist or the sociologist.<sup>24</sup> They may very well be the experts best qualified to deal with the question, if, in fact, the expectation of finding logical connections between the statements of the argument is baseless. Before accepting this defeat, the logician may adopt another hypothesis for the analysis of the essay. But first there is another implication of the practical view of criticism to be drawn out. A consideration of it should strengthen the suspicion that there is something wrong with the hypothesis that a practical

view of criticism provides.

On the emotive or attitudinal hypothesis, the test of appropriateness for any statement is set in terms of its psychological efficacy. The question one asks about critical remarks is, 'Does it have the intended effect of arousing in readers the feeling or attitude entertained by the critic?' The question of whether or not the critic's terms bear any correspondence to the work's features is irrelevant to testing the soundness of his argument, and so is the question of whether what he says on the first page is consistent with what he says on the last. The standards for judging critical arguments will be very like those used for judging the efficiency of other forms of propaganda. Any statement, however irrelevant or misleading, will be considered admissible so long as it is persuasive. The only restraint upon the critic will be imposed by the consideration that if what he says is obviously fantastic or incoherent, he will fail to induce in the readers a feeling or attitude similar to his own. On this view of the function of criticism, critics will be acclaimed for their power of convincing other people, and not for making just appraisals of works of art. As for Leavis, he succeeds or fails as a critic to the extent that he persuades other people not that Hard Times is a masterpiece but to have a feeling about the novel or an attitude toward it which is like his own. What such a feeling or attitude would be like remains obscure; one can only say that it is the kind of feeling or attitude that Leavis has toward masterpieces; and since this theory

permits us to say only that masterpieces are those things which excite a certain unspecified feeling or attitude, it proves, upon completing its circular course, most unhelpful.

Even if the above argument does not constitute a reductio ad absurdum of the theory reviewed, it should at least provoke some dissatisfaction with that theory. The discussion was intended to show that if a critical essay is read as a piece of practical reasoning, serious obstacles are encountered when one attempts to give an account of the logical relations holding between the statements. I am convinced that an emotive or an attitude theory can neither get around nor over these obstacles. There is yet another theory, which also takes criticism to be a practical science, to be considered. The main contention of this theory is that value judgements can best be understood if they are construed as imperatives. On this view, Leavis's essay will be read as a piece of advice. This version of the practical conception of criticism encounters different obstacles when it attempts to answer the question, 'Why did Leavis call Hard Times a "masterpiece"?' and it will be instructive to consider them.

The view that Leavis's claim for Hard Times constitutes an answer to his readers' presumed question 'What shall I read?' encourages an analysis of the critical essay along similar lines to those just explored. There are statements from which an imperative can be derived, and there are other statements which give the critic's reasons for offering the advice that he does. The assertion 'Hard Times is a masterpiece',



unless qualified in some way (e.g. 'but it is obscene', 'out of print', 'too difficult for you') is, on this view, equivalent in effect to the statement 'Read Hard Times'. It is a presupposition of serious literary criticism that its audience prefers masterpieces to pot-boilers and will make the above inference from simple indicative to imperative. 'Masterpiece' happens to be the word applied to works of art judged to be especially worthy of attention and its prescriptive force is strong and obvious. Since bad advice can be given about books as about other things, the critic's readers want to know his reasons for recommending the novel so strongly. Implicit in the statements which set forth these reasons are the standards of excellence which the critic either supposes his readers to accept or which he is trying to inculcate.

That remark about standards, useful in revealing the logical ground of the requirement that a critic should show some consistency amongst the judgements he makes of various works of art, raises the question of whether the standards or criteria used in aesthetic evaluation are of the same logical character as those used in other contexts. The answer to this question is dictated by the view one takes of the function of criticism. If it is supposed that the aim of criticism is the guidance of choices, then critical standards will be taken to be of the same formal kind as the standards according to which men or motor-cars are recommended. This is the position of R. M. Hare, whose book, The Language of Morals,<sup>25</sup> may serve as the text for the discussion of this version of

the prescriptive theory of critical discourse.

Hare understands the word 'good', as it occurs in such statements as 'This is a good motor-car', 'He is a good man', 'This is a good picture', to have both an evaluative meaning (its primary meaning) and a descriptive meaning (its secondary meaning).<sup>26</sup> As evaluative, 'good' commends or prescribes,<sup>27</sup> making clear the speakers' answers to the questions, 'Which motor-car shall I choose?' 'Which man shall I choose?' and 'Which picture shall I choose?' Understanding its descriptive meaning depends upon acquaintance with the standards by which the speakers judge the value of such things. To illustrate, "If two Indian Army Majors of the old school had been talking about a new arrival in the Mess, and one of them had said 'He's an awfully good man', we could have guessed that the subaltern referred to played polo, stuck pigs with élan, and was not on familiar terms with educated Indians. The remark, therefore would have conveyed information to one versed in the culture of British India. It would have been informative, because officers of the Indian Army were accustomed to award commendation or the reverse according to consistent standards."<sup>28</sup>

The same kind of analysis is given of a car expert's judgement, 'This is a good motor-car'. When asked why he recommends the car, the car expert replies with a series of statements describing the car's features, its high speed, stability, economical operation, and so on. These descriptive statements make known the speaker's standards in motor-cars,

standards which he must, in consistency, be willing to employ in all his judgements of motor-cars. "When I commend a motor-car I am guiding the choices of my hearer not merely in relation to that particular motor-car but in relation to motor-cars in general. What I have said to him will be of assistance to him whenever in the future he has to choose a motor-car or advise anyone else on the choice of a motor-car... The method whereby I give him this assistance is by making known to him a standard for judging motor-cars."<sup>29</sup>

Hare is prepared to extend this type of analysis to judgements of pictures: "Suppose that I say 'The South Bank Exhibition is very good'. In what context should I appropriately say this, and what would be my purpose in doing so? It would be natural for me to say it to someone who was wondering whether to go to London to see the Exhibition, or, if he was in London, whether to pay it a visit."<sup>30</sup> He interprets critical remarks in this way because he maintains that "When we commend or condemn anything, it is always in order, at least indirectly, to guide choices, our own or other people's, now or in the future."<sup>31</sup> Anticipating a difficulty hinted at by the phrase 'at least indirectly', he proceeds: "In order, therefore, to show that critical value-judgements are all ultimately related to choices, and would not be made if they were not so related, we require to ask, for what purpose we have standards."<sup>32</sup> His answer to this question succinctly expresses the practical view of criticism: "We only have standards for a class of objects, we only talk of the virtues of

one specimen as against another, we only use value words about them when occasions are known to exist, or are conceivable, in which we, or someone else, would have to choose between specimens. We should not call pictures good or bad if no one ever had the choice of seeing them or not seeing them (or of studying them or not studying them in the way that art students study pictures, or of buying them or not buying them)."<sup>33</sup>

Attempting to analyse Leavis's essay on Hard Times on the interpretative principle provided by this view of the critic's function, one notices a significant difference between the nature of the criteria he uses and the criteria, as Hare characterizes them, used by the car expert or the moralist. The statements which set forth the reasons for recommending the car or the man, those which "refer to, and express acceptance of, a standard which has an application to other similar instances,"<sup>34</sup> are, to use Hare's label,<sup>35</sup> straightforward descriptive statements: 'It has high speed combined with stability on the road'. 'It affords protection from the rain'. 'It has overdrive and a self-lubricating mechanism'. 'He plays polo'. 'He hunts wild boars'. 'He does not consort with the natives'.<sup>36</sup> But Leavis's reasons for calling Hard Times a masterpiece are not given in straightforward descriptive statements; the statements of his reasons are couched in words of potent evaluative force: "The confutation of Utilitarianism by life is conducted with great subtlety."<sup>37</sup> "Tom's escape is contrived, successfully in every sense, by means

belonging to Dickensian high-fantastic comedy."<sup>38</sup> "The profoundly serious intention is in control, the touch sure, and the structure that ensures the poise unassertively complex."<sup>39</sup>

Now if one tries to read the critic's argument as being analogous to those of the car expert and the moralist, Leavis will be taken to have failed in his purpose. One asks for his reasons for recommending Hard Times and expects, in accordance with this prescriptive theory, statements of fact. But one gets, instead, only further value judgements. The statements refer to standards (of seriousness, control, subtlety, etc.) which are, as the theory requires, applicable to other works of art. But they are, according to the distinction maintained by the theory, value statements, not the statements of fact which this theory interprets reasons for a judgement to be. This is the case because the standards used by the critic are different in kind from those used by the car expert or the British Major of Hare's examples. A man's playing polo is an observable event. And whether or not a motor-car is equipped with over-drive is also a question of fact. But whether a novelist has presented a scene with 'great subtlety' is a question not of fact but of critical judgement. Whatever may be the relation of such a critical remark to the judgement 'Hard Times is a masterpiece', it is not formally identical with the supporting statements of 'This is a good motor-car' or 'He is a good man'.

It appears, therefore, that this version of the practical view of criticism does not provide a satisfactory hypothesis

for explaining the logical relations between the statements of Leavis's essay. Since this essay may be taken as a typical piece of critical writing, some doubt must be felt about the adequacy of the hypothesis and of the conception of criticism upon which it is grounded. Unless it is supposed that Leavis has provided no satisfactory reasons for his judgement, it must be concluded that his reasons are expressed in statements of a kind logically different from the statements in which the car expert and the moralist of this logician's examples provide reasons for their judgements. This conclusion seems to be warranted by the comparison made above of the reasons advanced in the three different realms of discourse. This formal difference between a critical reason and the other kinds to which it was compared appears to reflect a difference between the nature of critical standards and technical or moral standards, as Hare conceives of them. In any case, an examination of this work of criticism shows that the standards or criteria used do not perform in the way required by the theory considered. Those statements of the critical argument which refer to criteria are logically dissimilar to the corresponding statements of the theorist's models. It is not surprising, therefore, that the question 'Why did Leavis call Hard Times a "masterpiece"?' is unanswerable if his argument is read as a prescription, a piece of advice, from which the imperative 'Read Hard Times' is to be inferred, for the argument is devoid of statements of the kind which this theory admits as reasons.



The failure of Hare's theory to account for the logic of critical argument must be explained. He assumes that the kind of reasons which serve for guiding choices, for recommending or commanding, serve equally well to support a critical judgement. I have shown this assumption to be dubious in the extreme. It is perhaps significant that Hare provided no analysis of even a hypothetical aesthetic judgement of the kind he applied to judgements of motor-cars or men. If his confidence in the logical similarity of the three kinds of discourse is misplaced, an analysis of critical arguments based upon his principles cannot fail to be misleading for want of vital distinctions. The root error of his theory's failure to account for the logic of critical argument is, I am sure, the mistaken notion that critical writing can be explained in terms of its choice-guiding function alone. If criticism is construed as a form of practical discourse, then certainly it will seem that the critic's principal business is to guide the choices of his readers in their dealings with works of art. I am convinced that this is not the critic's main function, and that to read his work as if it were can only lead to confusion about the logical structure of the arguments he uses.

Hare says that "We only have standards for a class of objects, we only talk of the virtues of one specimen as against another, we only use value words about them, when occasions are known to exist, or are conceivable, in which we, or someone else, would have to choose between specimens."<sup>40</sup> Now

certainly an occasion in which someone might have to choose between reading Hard Times and doing something else is conceivable. But how important is this fact? Is it an incidental fact or is it crucial for determining the construction to be put upon critical discourse? In my opinion it is an unimportant, circumstantial fact that has been mistakenly allowed at times to determine the entire conception of the nature and function of criticism.

The ineptness of prescriptive theories becomes apparent the moment one tries to conceive of critical statements performing the role assigned to them by logicians such as Hare, Carnap, Ayer, or Stevenson. "But actually," Carnap writes, "a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form. It may have effects upon the actions of men, and these effects may either be in accordance with our wishes or not; but it is neither true nor false."<sup>41</sup> A. J. Ayer presents the same view rather more timidly: "It is worth mentioning that ethical terms do not serve only to express feeling. They are calculated also to arouse feeling, and so to stimulate action. Indeed some of them are used in such a way as to give the sentences in which they occur the effect of commands."<sup>42</sup> And C. L. Stevenson writes: "Both imperative and ethical sentences are used more for encouraging, altering or redirecting people's aims and conduct than for simply describing them. Both differ in this respect from the sentences of science. And in arguments that involve disagreement in attitude, it is obvious that imperatives, like

ethical judgements, have an important place."<sup>43</sup>

This theory of value statements may be given a final test by attempting to use it to interpret a statement made by Eric Blom about Ravel's music: "He was above all an upholder of French tradition, the tradition of economy, clarity, elegance and reticence found - with exceptions, of course - throughout the history of French music."<sup>44</sup> Interpreting this statement according to Carnap as "a command in a misleading grammatical form," it must be asked what the reader has been commanded to do. Surely the defining characteristic of a command is that it makes clear what action must be performed if the speaker is to be obeyed. What Blom would have the reader do, or that he would have him do anything, is not made plain by this statement - perhaps because of its "misleading grammatical form"? But no rearrangement of its "grammatical form" would enable this statement to perform the function of a command. What effect such a remark could have "upon the actions of men" remains very obscure. That it must be either true or false seems, on the other hand, very obvious.

The terms "economy," "clarity," "elegance," and "reticence" express Blom's opinion of the French tradition and of Ravel's music, but they do not, as Ayer is committed to saying, express his feeling. One must read further to discover Blom's feeling about these characteristics of Ravel's music; Ravel was, he says, in these respects an "out-and-out conservative," and this "makes him seem less vital and interesting than we had thought him thirty years ago. We still expect him to

sound daringly enterprising, and are put out to find him nothing of the sort...."<sup>45</sup> That is Blom's "feeling" - he is "put out," disappointed; but "economy," "clarity," "elegance," and "reticence" do not express that feeling. These words have another job to do; they are used to characterize a musical style. They are not used to "arouse feeling" either, I think. They might, of course, arouse feelings of anger or animosity in readers who disagreed with Blom, but presumably the critic did not "calculate" their having such an effect. Nor are they used "to stimulate action." What can one do about the "economy," "clarity," "elegance," and "reticence" of a composer's style? One may admire these qualities or deplore them, but this is not to act. And whether one admires them or deplores them is irrelevant to the work these words have to do, namely to impart information about a style of music.

An impartial reading of critical literature, then, does not support the view that the purpose of critical argument is to prescribe actions. Such may at times be the critic's, and perhaps more often the reviewer's, intention, as I have already said. But to read every critical argument as if this were its end can only result in the sort of misunderstanding exhibited by the theories considered in the last eighteen pages. It seems likely that this view of criticism has been imposed without regard for the peculiarities of critical discourse for reasons that are cogent, if they are cogent at all, only in moral theory. Certain philosophers, mainly occupied

with problems of ethics, have found it expedient to stress the presumed fact that the aim of moral arguments is to guide choices. Since moral arguments are instances of evaluative discourse, it is supposed that what holds true of them must also hold true of critical arguments, which are also instances of evaluative discourse. The fallacy of distribution involved in the supposition has gone undetected with unfortunate results for critical theory.

One has only to read the first page of Leavis's essay on Hard Times to see that he is not setting out to guide his readers' choices of books, nor with advising or commanding them to do anything. He has a very different assignment. Beginning from the question "If, then, it is the masterpiece I take it for, why has it not had general recognition?"<sup>46</sup> he argues the inadequacy of the criteria used in "the traditional approach to 'the English novel',"<sup>47</sup> and proposes alternative criteria by which to assess the aesthetic value of the book. The remainder of his argument is mainly an attempt to show that Hard Times satisfies these criteria. He is not attempting to persuade people nor to command them to choose Hard Times for their summer reading. He is presenting a critical discussion of the book designed to support his aesthetic judgment of it. No action on the part of the reader is expected to follow his study of the essay. He may change his opinion of the book, agreeing with Leavis that it is a "masterpiece" and not "a very minor thing," "slight and insignificant," that Leavis says it is generally taken to be.<sup>48</sup> But a change of

opinion is not an action, nor is it a choice in the sense in which choice is usually associated with an action. The reader is not advised to choose Hard Times in preference to David Copperfield, as one might be advised to choose a Cadillac in preference to a Lincoln, or to choose to fight rather than to run away. The essay raises no question of choice, and this is typical of much critical writing. It does, however, raise a question "of the virtues of one specimen as against another"<sup>49</sup> (of the virtues of Hard Times as against Dickens's other novels<sup>50</sup>), and this is also typical of much critical writing.

Moral argument and critical argument, then, are distinguishable in terms of function. Failure to recognize the distinction results in error about the import of critical statements. Taken as logically equivalent to moral statements, they are transformed so that they will fit the logician's model. Taken as they actually occur in critical argument, they do not fit the schema derived from moral discourse. The statements 'Read Hard Times', 'You ought to read Hard Times', 'You ought to read Hard Times rather than David Copperfield' quite clearly belong to a different realm of discourse than does 'Hard Times is a masterpiece'. The first three statements are certainly practical, but they are not exclusively critical. They are moral remarks which critical reasons alone could not support. However tellingly Leavis defended his claim for Hard Times, his critical analysis would not in itself justify any one of the three prescriptive



statements. The advice they give introduces extra-aesthetic considerations, for it proposes an action involving moral considerations. Remarks such as, 'But your grandmother is dying, and you ought to be by her bedside', 'But David Copperfield is more likely to improve your character', and so on, all count against the advice given. But such remarks do not count against the statement, 'Hard Times is a masterpiece'. They belong to a totally different realm of discourse, viz. discourse about morality, and are therefore irrelevant to the critical judgement.

This same point was made by Stuart Hampshire in an article which construes all value judgements as comparative judgements and recommends their exclusion from criticism. The restriction he puts upon the term 'value judgement' seems to me unwarranted. He apparently assumes that the only point of comparing the value of two or more things is to help one to decide which of them is to be chosen. This assumption is a legacy from theories which view critical discourse and moral discourse as logically identical in character. In breaking away from this view, Hampshire has, I think, taken a wrong course through supposing that comparisons of value always involve moral considerations through being connected with choice. But what he says about the distinction between practical advice and critical remarks is consistent with the view that I am advancing:

Judgements of this second kind may be taken as practical advice that certain things ought to be read, seen, and heard, and the advice must involve some reference to the whole economy of human needs and purposes; but at this point the



critic has actually become a moralist, and the arguments supporting his recommendations are the subject-matter of ethics. 'Is this thing more worth attention than other objects of its kind?' is one question, and 'What is the peculiar arrangement of elements here and what are the effects of this arrangement?' is another. Most aesthetic theories have involved a confusion of answers to these two very different questions; no positive answer to the second by itself entails any answer to the first. One would need to add some further premises about changing human needs and interests; and there is no reason to assume that all works of art satisfy the same needs and interests at all times and for all people.<sup>51</sup>

It must be concluded, therefore, that the prevalent view, that critical arguments are necessarily connected with choice, is mistaken. "To praise is not to choose," Nowell-Smith writes, "but it is connected with choosing in that it would be odd for a man to choose the thing he was prepared to praise less highly or not at all."<sup>52</sup> What is Leavis committed to choosing through having praised Hard Times? He chose to read the novel, otherwise he wouldn't have praised it; and after he read it, he chose to praise it. But this triviality does not represent the kind of connection between critical praise and choice which the prescriptive theory requires. And it has never been shown, so far as I know, that there is any other logically significant connection between the two activities. It is not surprising, therefore, that theories of criticism which depend upon some such connection have failed to provide a fruitful hypothesis for inquiries into the logic of critical argument.

I must now try to show that a more efficient instrument

for logical analysis is provided by a conception of criticism as argument designed for formulating and justifying aesthetic evaluations. On this view, the critic is understood to be making assertions about the value of works of art which require justification, and the analyst is expected to give an account of the logical characteristics of this kind of justification. The problem is not merely to show by what means the critic can affect his readers' responses to a work, but to describe the logical conditions that must obtain in order for him to provide them with cogent argument about it. Of course the reader must not expect to find a complete logical analysis of a critical argument at this point. There are many problems that would have to be solved before such an exercise could be profitably undertaken. All that I can attempt here is to indicate the general lines of a logical analysis based upon a conception of critical argument as consisting of a set of statements all purporting to make correct assertions about works of art and logically related in ways not yet determined.

Reading Leavis's essay on these lines, he is seen to have two related problems. He must account for his own judgement that Hard Times is a masterpiece and explain its previous lack of critical recognition: "If, then, it is the masterpiece I take it for, why has it not had general recognition?"<sup>53</sup> Having announced his assignment, he then gives his first reason for the claim he makes for the book: "Yet, if I am right, of all Dickens's works it is the one that has all the strength of his genius, together with a strength no other of them can show -

that of a completely serious work of art."<sup>54</sup> This reason is itself a value judgement with a complicated function. The allusion to Dickens's other works establishes the sphere of reference within which the discussion will take place and implied comparisons be drawn. It also makes plain that Dickens's genius is to be assumed; Leavis is not obliged to support this verdict, for he is urging his judgement of Hard Times against contrary judgements by other critics who acknowledge the author's genius but not the relative worth of this particular work. The statement also introduces the criterion against which the implied comparisons are to be made: seriousness.

The statement determines the character of the discussion that follows. Leavis must clarify the meaning of 'seriousness' in this context and then show that the work is serious in the required sense. In order to do this he must elicit a set of operational terms from the clarification of 'seriousness' which will serve to begin the critical analysis of the novel. He must argue the importance and appropriateness of the criterion he is using and show the inadequacy of the criterion used by the critics with whose judgement of Hard Times he disagrees. He sets out immediately to do this:

The answer to the question asked above seems to bear on the traditional approach to 'the English novel'. For all the more sophisticated critical currency of the last decade or two, that approach still prevails, at any rate in the appreciation of the Victorian novelists. The business of the novelist, you gather, is to 'create a world', and the mark of the master is external abundance - he gives you lots of 'life'. The test of life in his

characters (he must above all create 'living' characters) is that they go on living outside the book. Expectations as unexact as these are not when they encounter significance, grateful for it, and when it meets them in that insistent form where nothing is very engaging as 'life' unless its relevance is fully taken, miss it altogether. This is the only way in which I can account for the neglect suffered by Henry James's The Europeans, which may be classed with Hard Times as a moral fable - though one might have supposed that James would enjoy the advantage of being approached with expectations of subtlety and closely calculated relevance. Fashion, however, has not recommended his earlier work, and this (whatever appreciation may be enjoyed by The Ambassadors) still suffers from the prevailing expectation of redundant and irrelevant 'life'.<sup>55</sup>

Every statement here is open to extensive analysis; the ramifications of some are vast and their relationships complex. I shall consider only two phrases, and they are crucial: "the prevailing expectation of redundant and irrelevant life," the criterion which Leavis imputes to those who approach the English novel in the traditional way, and "expectations of subtlety and closely calculated relevance," Leavis's own criterion of serious art which he is to use in his analysis of Hard Times. He argues that his adversaries' criterion is unexact, insensitive to novels which require a close reading if the relation of each part to the total design is to be detected. The importance of the criterion that he advocates is that it serves as an interpretative hypothesis for revealing the significance of the various parts of tightly constructed novels. 'Subtlety' and 'closely calculated relevance' are the features he values and the ones whose presence in Hard Times he seeks to reveal by citing and discussing the episodes and



characters and dialogue of the novel. The justification for using this criterion lies in its appropriateness to the moral fable as he defines it: "I need say no more by way of defining the moral fable than that in it the intention is peculiarly insistent, so that the representative significance of everything in the fable - character, episode, and so on - is immediately apparent as we read."<sup>56</sup>

Leavis, then, on the first page states his evaluation of Hard Times and reveals the criterion he is using to judge it. The remainder of his argument is concerned with showing that the novel satisfies the criterion and is therefore a masterpiece. The function of each of the ensuing statements is the same, namely, to advance the intention of the argument by showing the novel to be possessed of those features and combinations of features which his judgement, based upon the criterion, imply that it has. The relevance of any statement is tested by asking whether or not it does this, i.e., whether it is consonant with the evaluative intention of the statements with which it is associated and whether it actually refers to any discernible feature of the work. On this view, therefore, the logical connection between the statements of a critical argument is understood in terms of their mutual coherence as determined by the evaluative intention of the entire argument. This hypothesis must now be tested by asking whether those statements which proved recalcitrant to the practical view of criticism can be accounted for when construed as components of a reasoned argument offered in support of an aesthetic



judgement.

One of them was: "Actually, the Dickensian vitality is there, in its varied characteristic modes, which have the more force because they are free of redundance: the creative exuberance is controlled by a profound inspiration."<sup>57</sup> This statement refers back to the reason Leavis gives in his first paragraph for acclaiming Hard Times a masterpiece: "Yet, if I am right, of all Dickens's works it is the one that has all the strength of his genius, together with a strength no other of them can show - that of a completely serious work of art."<sup>58</sup> The statement in question reaffirms his earlier assertion that the novel has "all the strength of his genius," and the term "vitality," taken as a collective noun for the predicates of the sentence immediately preceding: "satiric irony," "the large and genial Dickensian way," "melodrama, pathos and humour," particularizes the claim made by "strength." The statement also supports the claim that Hard Times has "a strength no other of them can show," namely seriousness in the form of closely calculated relevance, a quality detected in the first two chapters through observing their lack of redundance. The remark also offers a tentative explanation ("profound inspiration") of this quality, of how, for once, Dickens constructed a completely serious novel, writing with "closely calculated relevance," "free of redundance." In the following paragraph Dickens's "inspiration," his total artistic conception, is explained and compared with his usual way of conceiving a novel. The function of this statement, therefore, is to support

Leavis's judgement by introducing predicates which ascribe to the work discernible qualities consonant with the criterion used and to further the critical analysis by proposing an explanation of how the artist managed to construct a work having these qualities.

The second remark with which the emotive and attitudinal theories had trouble is also plainly consistent with the evaluative intention of the argument: "But Dickens's art, while remaining that of the great popular entertainer, has in Hard Times, as he renders his full critical vision, a stamina, a flexibility combined with consistency, and a depth that he seems to have had little credit for."<sup>59</sup> Again the double claim is made that Hard Times shares in the virtues of Dickens's other novels and has one virtue peculiar to itself. The criterion of seriousness provides three more concepts for the critical interpretation of a passage which Leavis cites by way of illustration: these are "stamina," "flexibility combined with consistency," and "depth." His argument for stamina consists in analysing the scene quoted to show how the novelist makes a point ("against harmful tendencies in education"<sup>60</sup>) dramatically. Arguments for "flexibility combined with consistency" and "depth" follow, but they need not be examined here. What is to be noticed about this statement is that it advances the critic's aim (to support his judgement) by giving an impression of the work which is consistent with the impression given by the preceding statements. At the same time it characterizes the work in a more particular way than did

the preceding statements which called it "masterpiece" and "serious." It thereby provides a more exact notion of the features of the work to be discovered by analysis. The interpretative value of such a statement stems from its ability to serve as a kind of hypothesis for the detection of critically relevant features.<sup>61</sup>

Such is the interpretation put upon critical statements when they are construed as the instruments of reasoned discourse about the aesthetic value of works of art. The most general remark that can be made here about their function is that they are used to show that the work is possessed of the kind of features that the critical judgement implies it to have. And all that can be said now in general terms about the logical connections between the statements is that these are relations which are teleologically determined by the aim of critical discourse, which is to characterize a work of art in terms of value. Compared with theories which take the function of critical statements to be commanding, or the expression or the evocation of feelings or of attitudes, and which construe their connections externally, in terms of their psychological impact upon the reader, my view lacks simplicity. In return for the sacrifice of elegance, it offers, I think, an interpretative hypothesis adequate to the complexity of critical discourse.

## Chapter 2

### The Object of Critical Assertion

An account of the logical structure of critical argument must be based upon an understanding of what, in general, critical statements are about. Critical statements of appraisal are clearly intended to be about what are usually called 'works of art'. And a leading tenet of the view that critical judgments can be objective is that this intention is realized in some cases: some critical statements are, not only ostensibly but actually, about the works that are being evaluated. It might be supposed that anyone prepared to defend this tenet would find himself holding a position that was never attacked. But this is not so. Distinguished writers have denied this contention, maintaining that critical statements are not about the material objects accessible to the public in galleries and libraries, nor about the physical events which occur in concert halls and theatres, but that they are about other things which are usually called by philosophers 'aesthetic objects'.

An aesthetic object differs from what is called in common parlance a 'work of art' in that it is dependent upon the experience of an individual spectator. The value of an

aesthetic object is determined not only by what the artist has made but also by the nature of the response made to the work by each individual who comes in contact with it. Da Vinci painted only one Mona Lisa, but there are as many aesthetic objects connected with this work as there are people who have contemplated it. A critical judgement made about any one of these aesthetic objects does not refer to any other aesthetic object. Each critic who formulates an evaluation of that painting really talks about something with which he alone can be acquainted. Critical statements are therefore subjective in one important sense. For to say that the statement of a critical judgement is objective is, in this sense, to imply that it is about an object which can be examined by any observer who wishes to test the correctness of the statement.

In my opinion critical theory should be rid of this artificial distinction between the physical objects produced by artists and performers and the aesthetic objects of critics' experiences. It gives a specious sanction to diverting the reference of critical statements from public to private objects, and thereby fosters the illusion of warranting a subjectivist view of critical judgements. There is no binding reason for granting this distinction. It may be utilized in any inquiry where it facilitates analysis without distorting the phenomenon to be explained. But it is neither useful nor harmless when posited in an inquiry into the logic of critical argument; rather, as I shall try to show in this chapter, it obstructs an understanding of the logical character of critical statements

and of their relationships.

Aesthetic evaluation invites three quite different kinds of investigation, viz. psychological investigation of aesthetic experience, metaphysical inquiry into the nature of art, and logical analysis of the statements made by critics about works of art. The psychologist may find it convenient to postulate a distinction between the physical object (a work of art described purely in terms of its physical properties) and the aesthetic object (the same work of art described as the valued object of an experience). The same distinction may facilitate the speculations of a metaphysician who is trying to answer the question, 'What is art?' But no such psychological or metaphysical questions need be raised in a logical study of critical discourse which takes critical assertion as its datum. This inquiry does not aim at making any discoveries about critics' experiences nor about works of art that cannot be inferred from critical writing. The present concern is with what critics write about works of art when evaluating them, and not with what happens to critics in the presence of those works. Since the critic is considered here to be the expert on the subject of art, all extra-critical speculation as to what art is might have been excluded from this thesis. However, some of these philosopher-psychologists and metaphysicians have presumed to illuminate criticism by answering the question of just what kind of thing a critic refers to when he uses the name of a work of art. Mistaken answers to this fundamental question ensure their failure. It will be necessary, therefore, to



examine arguments representative of these two approaches, psychological and metaphysical, in order to show that the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy is fatal to any attempt to understand the principles of criticism.

The tenability of the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy, then, need not be categorically denied. All that I wish to accomplish is its abolition from theory of criticism designed to explain the logic of critical discourse. There is no reason to suppose that a distinction which is pragmatically justified by psychological investigations of aesthetic experience, or by metaphysical inquiries into the nature of art, is also useful for a logical study of critical argument. On the contrary, I think that it can be shown that the distinction is otiose and misleading when postulated within the context of a study of critical assertion. Certain problems about the reference of critical remarks whose resolution has been thought to depend upon this distinction are, when clarified, more readily solved without recourse to it. Further, theories that assume the distinction give a false answer to the question of what critical statements are about. For, as I shall try to show, critical statements are neither about what philosophers call 'physical objects', nor about what they call 'aesthetic objects'; nor are some about one such thing and some about the other. They are all about what are ordinarily called 'works of art', and any analysis that does not take this fact into account can hardly fail to yield a mistaken view of critical discourse. It is therefore important to get rid of this

distinction which engenders a misrepresentation of what it is that critics write about.

This same dichotomy is to be found in philosophical literature where neither an analytical distinction required for psychological inquiry nor the satisfaction of any special metaphysical interest can account for it. In these cases it is the statements made about works of art that give rise to the problem which the distinction is invoked to resolve. This problem of discovering what kind of entity the name of any work of art designates is a purely theoretical one, having no counterpart in critical practice. If in the course of ordinary conversation or of critical discussion someone speaks of Hamlet, or of Haydn's London Symphony, or of De Latour's The Prisoner, it rarely occurs to anyone to ask what is meant by these names, to what these titles refer. Such a question might be asked if, for example, it were uncertain whether a critical comment on Hamlet referred to the production currently running at the Old Vic or to the motion picture of several years ago. But this practical problem of communication would be resolved independently of the theoretical issue of whether critical remarks are about physical objects or about aesthetic objects. The philosophical question about the true identity of Hamlet is not asked because there is a real difficulty in understanding what a critic is talking about when on some particular occasion he uses the name 'Hamlet'. Philosophers ask the question in order to discover what kind of thing is designated whenever the name 'Hamlet' is used. Since the name is

variously used to refer to a number of quite different kinds of things, the philosopher's question is wrongly put, and his attempts to answer it are attempts to locate a phantom,

The quest for the undiscovered Hamlet has its parallel in the other arts, and reflects a state of mind ripe for the production of certain theories about the ontological status of works of art to be encountered in a moment. The Hamlet problem, and the problem raised by questions about whether Haydn's 104th symphony is the musical notation printed in the score, the movement of air columns, sounds heard, or the listener's mental events, and whether De Latour's painting is just pigment on canvas or a visual construct made with its aid by the eyes and brain of the spectator, can be put to rest by showing that if the problem were genuine our talk about these works would not be understood, which it is. The proposed solution is simple, merely recalling the reader's attention to what he must suppose to be the case concerning the use of the terms in question in order for talk about works of art to be intelligible. Its chief merit is that it shows certain sophisticated metaphysical theories about the nature of works of art and man's experience of them to be unnecessary and misleading, and thus clears the way for an understanding of criticism.

The terms 'Hamlet', 'The Prisoner', 'Symphony 104', and all other names of works of art can, each of them, refer at different times to any one of a number of different things or events. To what exactly any such term refers in any instance of its use is made clear by the context in which it appears.

A review of a performance of Haydn's London Symphony by the Halle Orchestra would not leave the reader to wonder if the reviewer was discussing the Halle Orchestra's performance, or Beecham's recording of some year's ago, or Haydn's score, or the reviewer's own experience on a certain occasion. If there should be any doubt about what a writer is referring to when he uses the name of a work of art, if, for instance, it is not clear whether he is discussing a newly printed edition of Hamlet or a certain stage presentation, this obscurity is not attributable to any inherent difficulty about the identity of Hamlet, but to the writer's failure to make clear what he is talking about.

The lesson to be learned from this is that we need no special ontological knowledge about works of art in order to understand critical remarks. All that is required in this regard is that we know what particular thing or event the critic is talking about, a condition which is almost always fulfilled. We should be aware of theorists who attempt to interpose between us and the work of art such fictional entities as make more difficult than need be an understanding of critical communication. Writers who invoke the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy in order to resolve problems arising from reflection upon our way of talking about works of art are theorists of this kind. I shall first examine some of their arguments, and then proceed to the work of the metaphysicians and philosopher-psychologists.

The problem under review is not one raised by works of such

doubtful value that their right to be regarded as authentic works of art remains problematic. This philosophical question of what a work of art is cannot be answered by critical judgments. It is not a question of what particular things have sufficient aesthetic value to merit the honorific title 'work of art'; nor is it even the more general question of what kind of features anything must have in order to be classified as a work of art. Two or more people might agree on the aesthetic value of a certain work, and also agree on the set of criteria by which such a work should be judged, and nevertheless disagree about what a work of art really is. Perfect critical harmony is compatible with complete philosophical disagreement about the kind of thing to which the term 'work of art' refers. This same philosophical difference might be found amongst people who were in accord concerning the kind of articles that should be considered works of art. Even after it has been agreed that cartoons, mobiles, furniture, fabrics, pottery, and other border-line items should or, however excellent of their kind certain specimens might be, should not be called works of art, the philosophical problem will persist untouched. Since solving it would be of no help in deciding which classes of things are properly called 'art', nor which members have artistic value, it may fairly be asked how this problem came into philosophical prominence. I shall answer briefly by stating two perplexities which emerge after even a few moments reflection upon our way of talking about works of art.

Works of art of some kinds exist as single items, others in

numerous replicas which are in no important way distinguishable from one another. Rembrandt's Christ at Emmaus exists within its frame at the Louvre, and Le Penseur on his pedestal at the Rodin Gardens. Copies or reproductions of such works can be made, and when the technique of mechanically reproducing them has been sufficiently improved, the replicas may, as André Malraux predicts, come to be regarded from a purely aesthetic point of view as quite as valuable as the originals. But at the present time works of pictorial and plastic art are considered, usually, to be most aesthetically valuable in their unique and original form, and it is customary, indeed morally and legally obligatory in most countries, to acknowledge a distinction between them and the reproductions made of them. It is, then, generally accepted that the names Christ at Emmaus and Le Penseur are each rightfully applied to one object and to one object only, and that they must be qualified when applied to copies or reproductions of them.

The identity of a poem, or of any published literary work, cannot be fixed in the same way. Libraries abound with copies of Paradise Lost, and no one hesitates to denote by this title a great variety of objects (printed editions) whose physical characteristics (typographical, e.g.) vary from one another and from the original manuscript. Although the prototype of all of these copies can be traced by going back through a series of editions to John Milton's manuscript, as all reproductions of Rembrandt's painting can be traced back to the canvas at the Louvre, no one regards the original script of the poem as



having other than museum value. The literary or aesthetic value of the poem attaches equally to any accurately printed text, in so far as it can be said to attach to such a material object at all. Some philosophers are very reluctant to admit that the aesthetic value of Milton's poetic conception is embodied in the words he put on paper in the same sense as the value of Rembrandt's conception is embodied in pigment or Rodin's in bronze. "No one," Benedetto Croce observes, "calls the book which contains the Divine Comedy, or the score which contains Don Giovanni, beautiful in the same sense in which the block of marble which contains Michael Angelo's Moses, or the piece of coloured wood which contains the Transfiguration, is metaphorically called beautiful."<sup>1</sup> Other philosophers do not find in the distinction Croce makes here any difference of philosophical significance, believing that the work of art which is valued, whether literary, musical, plastic or pictorial, is something apart from its material embodiment.<sup>2</sup> They agree, however, that there is a problem concerning literature of justifying the use of a single name to designate indiscriminately any one of a multiplicity of similar objects. 'What or where is the real Paradise Lost?' is the aesthetician's question. It is when we ask what we intend to refer to when we use the name of a literary work that we realize most forcibly that the objects to which we attribute aesthetic value are not the same as the physical objects which we actually encounter on library shelves.

The second perplexity emerges from reflection on music and

the dramatic arts. A musical composition or a play can in some sense or other exist in the mind of the composer or dramatist, in a score or scenario, in a performance, or in the act of perception and appreciation of a spectator. Which one of these things or events is, really, the music or the play? To which can such names as The Enigma Variations and Coriolanus be properly applied?

Such are the perplexities that have inspired some contemporary aesthetic views, for example those advanced by C. I. Lewis in An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation:

Consider, for example, what entity it is which is termed 'Beethoven's Fifth Symphony'. A musical composition is not a physical object: any particular rendition of it is a physical entity of its own complex sort; but between the rendition and the thing itself, there is an obvious difference. The rendition may not, and presumably will not, realize exactly the musical intention of the composer or the esthetic possibilities represented by the composition. And in the case of a sonnet or other product of the literary art, there is an even wider gap between the thing itself and the apprehension of it. Here we must ordinarily provide our own rendition; and in so doing we may not only miss a part of the intended meaning but inadvertently introduce certain grace-notes and variations of our own. Also, that most complex of all esthetic things, the drama, is in some of these respects like music, and in others like poetry; but at least it is clear that a drama cannot be identified with any physical object.<sup>5</sup>

Lewis argues that it would be wrong to suppose that no similar distinction between the aesthetic object and the physical work is required in the case of a painting, a cathedral, or a piece of sculpture. It is not the painted canvas or the hewn marble that is the object of aesthetic contemplation and evaluation, but something which is common to this canvas or

piece of marble and to the various reproductions that have been or could be made of either. This "thing itself," the real work of art, is distinct from the material object which incorporates it.

It would seem that if a distinction between a musical composition and any particular rendition of it is admitted, then a similar distinction must in consistency be admitted between an architectural design and its execution by craftsmen. Although Lewis does not develop this argument, his mention of "a cathedral"<sup>4</sup> at this point suggests he would accept it; and the analogy between composition, score, performance and design, drawing, construction would seem to be a fair one. But if one goes this far, it would seem that in consistency one must go even further and admit a comparable distinction between any human conception or design and its material realization, for example, between the engineer's plan for a bridge and the structure made according to that plan. The engineer's idea of how the bridge should be built, his drawings, and the completed structure may all come in for criticism. The bridge may have been well or poorly conceived, the drawings may or may not convey the conception adequately, and the structure may be characterized by good workmanship or by bad. It is important to make clear whether one is talking about the engineer's conception or his workers' execution of it when saying, 'This is a good (or bad) bridge'. But it would be very odd to say that the statement, 'This bridge is very poorly constructed; the workmanship is shoddy', was not really about the bridge

itself but about a rendition of it. And in certain cases it would be equally odd to say that a criticism of the design was not really about the physical construction. Anyone saying, 'This bridge is too narrow for the traffic it must bear, and too low for the shipping that must go under it' may certainly be speaking with direct reference to the physical structure (he may even be standing on it), or with direct reference to any one of a number of similar structures built according to the design in question. Of course, he might also be speaking with reference to the engineer's drawings, or with reference to a plan presented by the engineer in conversation. But there is no inherent reason why his statements could not be about the physical construction and not about "an abstract entity here embodied or approximated to."<sup>5</sup> Although there is admittedly room and sometimes need for a distinction between a plan and the thing made according to it, it does not follow that the thing cannot be the object of critical observation and judgement even when it is the value of the design that is in question. The terms 'too low' and 'too narrow' may take the bridge, the physical construction, as their referent just as surely as the terms 'poorly fitted' and 'insecurely rivetted'.

Similarly, a composer's work may be criticized by reference to a particular performance of it. That the composition may be given many performances, each of them providing music critics with an opportunity for appraising the composer's talent, provides no grounds for saying that the critical statements are not about the real composition but only about

a rendition of it. The evaluation of a rendition requires a judgement of an orchestra's performance comparable to the judgement made of the bridge-builders' workmanship. But this same rendition may be the object of a critical appreciation and judgement of the composer's achievement, just as the completed bridge was the object studied in the evaluation of the architect's design. The accomplished critic might, of course, have based his judgement upon a study of the score instead of upon his hearing of the performance. But this possibility no more gives grounds for saying that his remarks are about "an entity which itself is abstract and ideal,"<sup>6</sup> and not about what he heard, than the possibility of appraising an architectural design by a study of drawings gives grounds for saying that the evaluation of the architect's work actually based upon an inspection of the completed structure is not really about that structure but about an "abstract entity."<sup>7</sup>

If a musical composition were neither what is written down in musical notation nor what is played by musicians, no critic could ever say anything about it. But it happens that a musical composition just is the sort of thing that is written in symbols of a certain type and performed on instruments of a special kind. These are its modes of existence. Considered as an object of critical judgement, it makes no sense to attribute to it some publicly inaccessible mode of being. To do so is to remove in theory a condition of the objectivity of aesthetic judgements which obtains in practice.

"A sonnet," Lewis claims, "cannot be identified with any



physical individual. Not only is it one and the same thing which we and our neighbor may read in different books, but what is essential to the thing presented is not physically there on the printed page, but only conveyed from one mind to another by a pattern of physical symbols... Even the rhythm and cadence of the language used, which lie within the aesthetic phenomenon, are not presented to the eye but only associated with what is physically present."<sup>8</sup> And Harold Osborne has recently written that "a very little thought even at the common-sense level"<sup>9</sup> is enough to dispose of the naïve view that a work of art is a "material thing with specific qualities and attributes - a statue as a piece of carved stone or wood with the attribute of beauty, a picture as a piece of pigmented canvas, and so on."<sup>10</sup> He points out that there is no material object which corresponds to a work of literary or musical art:

A poem is a specific set of words, which need not even become audible for the poem to be appreciated. A musical work is a set of musical sounds, which may be recorded on paper or on a gramophone disc, actualized by performance or merely imagined in memory. Musical and literary works of art are often recorded in a physical medium, but the physical recording is never identical with the work of art. There may be many thousands of printed copies of the same poem, but the excellence of the poem is the same whether they are well or badly printed. There may be many printed scores and many gramophone records of the same musical composition, but the musical composition is something different from any one of them. Nor should we try to define a work of art as the class of all recordings which are commonly called recording of that work of art. For a recording is always a recording of something which exists independently of all its recordings and prior to most of them."<sup>11</sup>

I am unable to imagine what it would be like to find a poem, "a specific set of words," which existed independently



of any recording in a physical medium — taking spoken words as one instance of such 'recording'. Agreeing that poems can exist in the minds of poets, or in the memories of other persons, it is not there that we ever find them. A musical composition that has its being independently of a score, a performance 'live' or recorded, or of anyone's memory is an equally elusive phantom. "It is like the score of music rather than the rendition," Lewis says of the poem. "Yet this poem is actual," he admits, "as against those as yet undreamt of, solely by the fact that this language-pattern has its concrete and physically occurrent instances."<sup>12</sup> Is this 'concrete and physically occurrent language pattern', this which is printed here in the book, not the 'actual' poem, the actual thing which becomes the object of critical judgement?

If the poems and musical compositions in the embodiments in which they are always encountered are not identical with the work of art, but something different from it, what, exactly, is this work of art that maintains its independence of all its physical manifestations? It is, Osborne decrees, "an enduring possibility of a specific set of perceptions."<sup>13</sup> But if there is to be "a specific set of perceptions," there must be something to perceive. And it is just those things that Osborne has rejected as being "something different" from the work of art that are perceived. It is incomprehensible how, on this line of reasoning, a work of art ever could be perceived.

But of course it is not really the work of art that is

perceived, according to Osborne. What is perceived are the words printed in a book or the sounds of music. And the work of art is neither of these, nor, changing his mind within the space of a single paragraph, is it the "enduring possibility of a specific set of perceptions"; rather it is "a characteristic set of sense-perceptions."<sup>14</sup>

This reasoning strikes me as being most unsound, and Osborne's speculations become even more dangerous as he proceeds. Before following him further, the problem raised by the ubiquity of certain works of art should be settled.

First, the fact that a number of nearly identical things are each denoted by the same name and the totality of them by the same name is by no means a peculiarity of art. I have just now read a book review in which the writer discusses Ivy Compton-Burnett's novel, Mother and Son. In the same magazine, a writer of advertising copy speaks in praise of the 1955 Packard Clipper. Although both writers speak of their subject in the singular, I am sufficiently aware of the habits of publishers and automobile manufacturers to realize that there is more than one volume stamped Mother and Son and more than one automobile bearing the name 'Packard Clipper'. How many there are of either, or just which specimens the writers had in mind, would not be information at all helpful for understanding what they have to say. If someone read that the English pound sterling was worth two dollars and eighty cents, it would be stupid of him to inquire which note, exactly, was worth that amount, and equally stupid of him to ask the

publican who demands a shilling for a glass of ale which shilling piece he would like. It so happens that the fortunes of all English pound notes are decided together at the money exchange, and each one is of the same value as every other one. For certain purposes, for most purposes, it makes no difference which one of the hundreds of thousands of shilling pieces in circulation is used. Similarly, whatever copy of Mother and Son the reviewer used would have the same value as any other copy, and for the purposes of the review it makes not the slightest difference which copy he read. The existence of numerous copies of a literary work, therefore, constitutes no difficulty for the practitioner or reader of literary criticism, and no difficulty about the reference of its name. It just happens, as it does with cars and currency, that the same name and the same statements apply with equal felicity to a great number of almost identical objects.

This discussion may sound so trifling that the importance of the point I am trying to make will be slighted. The point is this. The fact that there are many copies of a literary work, and that it is a matter of indifference which is used for the purpose of evaluation, has been taken as grounds for arguing that the value of the work cannot attach to any of the copies, and that therefore none of the copies, nor all of them together, can be called the work of art. The same facts might have been taken, as I have taken them, as showing that the value attaches equally and impartially to everyone of the copies, and that any one of them, therefore, may properly be

designated as the work of art. The chief merit of my contention is that it certifies as the work of art the very thing that a critic perceives and experiences and writes about. The chief defect of the counterargument, of one such as Osborne's, is that it fails to do this. Rightly insisting that if a thing is a copy, it must be a copy of something, Osborne is unable to say of what a printed poem or novel is a copy, because he will not deal in such trifling commodities as authors' manuscripts and proof sheets. I am quite willing to engage in such low commerce in order to avoid substituting a phantom for a fact. Once printed books are resigned to limbo, and the true work of art situated in the insubstantial sense-perceptions of individual minds, difficulties of great magnitude for a theory of criticism are abroad.

Osborne's error is a tenacious one, enjoyed in common by philosophers who find little else to share. Having distinguished the 'real' work of art from any object which would ordinarily be called a work of art, Osborne moves with the metaphysicians and philosopher-psychologists straight to the view that works of art dwell in a mental realm. "It is not the material object of paint and canvas which is beautiful," he says, "but the set of visual impressions to which it gives rise under suitable conditions."<sup>15</sup> Refusing to acknowledge the reference of critical remarks as they are given, he camps on the fertile ground of subjectivism with Croce and Collingwood, with Richards and Pepper, Leon, Abercrombie, Dewey, and with many other philosophers who construe the work

of art as a construction of the percipient's imagination. Before examining some of their theories, the remainder of the argument offered by Osborne in support of the position may be considered:

The recording is not the work of art and we do not ascribe beauty to the material recording... When we speak of a work of art we refer, then to an enduring possibility of a specific set of perceptions. We say that the work of art is actualized when somebody reads the poem adequately or when the piece of music is adequately performed to a competent audience. And as we do not ascribe beauty to the recording, so we cannot without doing violence to the language ascribe beauty to any of the immediate physical antecedents of the set of aural impressions which occurs when a piece of music is actualized. We do not ascribe beauty to the bodily movements of the orchestra, to the resultant sound waves, to the titillation of the aural mechanism or to the consequent cerebral excitation. For the purposes of criticism and aesthetics, at any rate, the work of art must be identified only with a characteristic set of sense-perceptions, and to this only beauty must be ascribed.<sup>16</sup>

The conclusion is that the work of art is to be identified with "a characteristic set of sense-perceptions," but not with "sound waves," "the titillation of the aural mechanism," or "the consequent cerebral excitation." Osborne is right, I think, about what he denies; but I doubt the truth of what he asserts. To what, in fact, is beauty usually ascribed by the critic who speaks admiringly of Vaughan William's Pastoral Symphony? It is ascribed to the music; and the terms "music," "the work of art," and the name "Pastoral Symphony" all denote the same thing, namely what is heard. What is heard is admittedly not sound waves or aural titillation or cerebral excitation - the antecedent, casual events of the experience of



hearing. But neither is "a characteristic set of sense-perceptions" what is heard; and therefore "a characteristic set of sense-perceptions" is no more identical with the music or the work of art or Pastoral Symphony than is "the bodily movements of the orchestra," "the resultant sound waves," "the titillation of the aural mechanism," or "the consequent cerebral excitation."

Osborne says that "The recording is not the work of art and we do not ascribe beauty to the material recording," and his notion of "material recording" includes the composer's score, the orchestra's performance, and the listener's memory of the music he has heard. Then he asserts: "When we speak of a work of art we refer, then, to an enduring possibility of a specific set of perceptions." But surely this statement misrepresents what we do refer to when we speak of a work of art. To what is Neville Cardus referring when speaking of Sibelius's Seventh Symphony?

Four movements may clearly be discerned in Sibelius's Number Seven: first a slow adagio ending with the repetition of the ascending scale-passage that begins the work; then we have a bridge passage, with palpable sequences for oboes and clarinets; this transition changes to six-four time, and now the symphony goes into its scherzo, which broadens to an allegro with the accented notes of the one unmistakably lyrical melody of the work. The fourth movement is heralded by strenuous imitative figures which recall the race into the finale of the Second Symphony...<sup>17</sup>

These statements apply equally well to any published score of Sibelius's Seventh Symphony or to any performance of it. Cardus may have had one of these scores before him as he wrote,



or he may have had some particular performance that he had heard in mind. Sense perceptions of some kind, obtained by looking at a score or listening to an orchestra, were a necessary condition of his making these remarks. But he is not referring to these sense perceptions; rather he is making use of them in order to refer to what they are perceptions of. Nor is he referring to "an enduring possibility of a specific set of perceptions" which is neither score nor performance but a theorist's invention which no critic ever actually encounters. It must be recognized that critical remarks refer to a public, observable object or event and not to the sense perceptions which are a condition of such assertions being made.

In addition to the fact that the name of a literary work of art can apply to any one of numerous, somewhat different objects, and that the name of a theatrical or musical work can apply to either scenario or score or to a performance, there is the perplexing consideration that as an experienced object the same work of art may differ from one percipient to another. Making due allowance for the accidents which befall works of art, the beheading and dismemberment of statues, the fading and cracking of canvasses, the atrocities committed by freebooting editors, the transcription of old music for new ensembles, and so on, one may say that as physical structures works of art present throughout certain relatively lengthy periods of their careers the same face to all men. Considered independently of the idiosyncrasies of individual spectators, a work of art may be said to possess in its own right certain objective physical

characteristics which do not depend upon any contribution from the percipient. The difficulty is to see how a work of art could be considered independently of the idiosyncrasies of any spectator. In order to become an object of consideration, of discussion, appreciation, or criticism, a work of art must be experienced. It therefore becomes an object of some individual's experience. Since the nature of this thing as experienced depends not only upon the properties of the work just mentioned but also upon the sensibility, technical skill, background, knowledge, mood, and countless other psychological, cultural, and physiological characteristics of the percipient, it cannot be supposed that one person's object-as-experienced is the same as another's. This consideration is the most serious of the three. It poses the question of what the work really is by putting the choice between this physical object hanging on the wall and this thing which has its being in some person's perceptual experience. Contemporary philosophers have been almost unanimous in identifying the work of art with the second of these.

I may hazard an explanation of how aestheticians have thus managed to confuse the work of art with what occurs in the minds of those who experience it. Although the aesthetic experiences presupposed in making critical judgements of works of art are a complicated phenomenon which is not well understood, most readers will, I think, let the following general remarks on the critic's qualifications pass unchallenged. The expert critic presumably has an acute sensitivity, native or

developed or both, to works of art, which is not possessed in the same measure by all men. This is not to deny, of course, that there may be many connoisseurs who are not professional critics. It is only to say that the professional critic of deserved reputation has a talent for discerning aesthetic values which is at least as specific as the physician's gift for discriminating amongst diseases. The expert critic also has wider than common experience in the field of art within which he professes to make dependable judgements. Granted these qualifications, the professional critic may be expected to recognize aesthetic values in objects which would be unappreciated by persons lacking his sensibility, training, and experience.

One might say, speaking loosely of such cases, that the critic discovered a work of art where unqualified persons saw none. And then one might say, speaking even more loosely, that it is the imaginative power of the critic which has brought this unvalued object to life as a work of art, both for himself and for his readers to whom he interprets the work. This sort of loose talk finally ends in the conviction that works of art really only exist as the imaginative productions of spectators who have responded appropriately to physical objects which, apart from any such response, are not really works of art at all. It is forgotten that in order to have any sort of acquaintance with any object, and to say anything about it, one must have some experience of it. "For art-," writes Lascelles Abercrombie, who rejects the notion

that works of art are "invariable objects," "and for aesthetics generally - objects do not exist, but only experiences; at least objects only exist as occasions of experience."<sup>18</sup>

'For science', one might say, 'natural objects only exist as occasions of experience', meaning that the scientist can talk only about what he encounters in experience. But it would be strange to conclude from this that natural objects do not exist. However, many philosophers who would not say that a statement affirming that an object is red is really about an object brought into being by the perceiver and not about something existing independently of him are nevertheless committed to saying that a critical statement attributing a so-called value feature to a work of art is about an object produced by the spectator's imaginative activity, or even about the spectator's experience, and not about something existing independently of him. For example, John Dewey writes that "The real work of art is the building up of an integral experience out of the interactions of organic and environmental conditions and energies,"<sup>19</sup> laying the ontological basis for the view that critical remarks are about experiences and not about what are ordinarily called 'works of art'. "It has been repeatedly intimated," says Dewey, "that there is a difference between the art product (statue, painting, or whatever), and the work of art. The first is physical and potential; the latter is active and experienced."<sup>20</sup>

More is contained in such utterances than the laying down of a linguistic convention for the use of the term 'work of

art'. A metaphysical claim is being made concerning the nature of the entity that critical remarks are about. Admission of the claim would have consequences of supreme importance for theory of criticism; for it would be tantamount to admitting that critical statements, unlike the statements made about things other than art, are not about objects. To the extent that this peculiarity of critical remarks is supposed to derive from the highly specialized character of the experiences required for making them, it is easily seen to be illusory.

However many people there may be who are incapable of the experience necessary for judging the value of a work of art, their incompetence no more implies that the expert critic creates the valuable object than does the inadequacy of colour blind people imply that the reliable observer creates the coloured object. When there is no experience of the kind generally called aesthetic, there will be no recognition of the aesthetic value of the object. But there is no reason to suppose that when there is recognition of the aesthetic value of an object, that this valued object, the work of art, must be something apart from, and in addition to, that same object which might have gone unvalued. Objects in the world of art, as in the world of nature, are experienced, and some of these are valuable. But no new objects are produced by the experience in question. It is remarkable that the multiplication of entities beyond necessity in aesthetic theory has escaped Ockham's razor for so long. When it is applied, the

aesthetic object (the work of art) does not survive in isolation from the physical object (the thing that the artist has made). Since my own parsimonious view of what a work of art is cannot recommend itself on grounds of popularity, some further arguments for the generous notion that each work of art is really two objects will have to be considered.

Taking the high road of speculative philosophy Benedetto Croce also arrived at the place where the physical object and the aesthetic object part company:

Aesthetic activity, distinct from the practical activity is always accompanied by it in its manifestations. Hence, its utilitarian or hedonistic side, and the pleasure and the pain which are, as it were, the practical echo of aesthetic value and disvalue, of the beautiful and the ugly. But this practical side of the aesthetic activity has in its turn a physical or psychophysical accompaniment, which consists of sounds, tones, movements, combinations of lines and colours, and so on.

Does it really possess this side, or does it only seem to possess it, through the construction which we put on it in physical science, and the useful and the arbitrary methods which we have already several times set in relief as proper to the empirical and abstract sciences? Our reply cannot be doubtful, that is, it must affirm to the second of the two hypotheses.<sup>21</sup>

Criticism is concerned with the aesthetic value of physical objects or events called 'works of art'. Croce's theory can have no bearing upon this enterprise. His theory has to do with 'aesthetic activity', with imagination, and with distinguishing this from certain other categories of human (spiritual) activity. His aesthetic theory is essentially indifferent to painted canvasses, written books, played music, and the like:

The complete process of aesthetic production can be symbolized in four stages, which are: a, impressions; b, expression or spiritual aesthetic



synthesis; c, hedonistic accompaniment, or pleasure of the beautiful (aesthetic pleasure); d, translation of the aesthetic fact into physical phenomena (sounds, tones, movements combinations of lines and colours, etc.). Any one can see that the capital point, the only one that is properly speaking aesthetic and truly real, is in b, which is lacking to the merely naturalistic manifestation or construction also metaphorically called expression.<sup>22</sup>

Surely "any one can see" that what comes under 'b' is of no more importance than what comes under 'a', 'c', and 'd' for a theory which attempts to deal with "the complete process of aesthetic production." But Croce is not really interested in aesthetic production understood as the creation of works of art; he is concerned to give "aesthetic activity" a place in his system and to show its relation to the other categories or modes of spiritual activity. Indifference to "sounds, tones, movements, combinations of lines and etc." disqualifies his theory for illuminating criticism which is concerned with just such phenomena.

For Croce, art is intuition, and "Every true intuition or representation is also expression."<sup>23</sup> The term 'expression' is used in two senses: to designate the inner activity of intuition, and, occasionally, in accordance with ordinary usage, to refer to setting forth one's artistic conceptions in symbols for the purpose of communication. 'Expression' connotes not only verbal expression but also expression in line, colour, tone, etc. as well; it does not usually carry the implication that any word need be spoken or written, any line drawn, or any sound produced; all that is required to certify the

presence of an intuition is that it be expressible externally. The externalization of an intuition is for the purpose of recording it, of communicating it. Though Croce wishes to minimize the importance of this externalization and of the technique involved in communication, he nevertheless makes such externalization the test of the value of the intuition.

Leonardo, he says, possessed the Last Supper intuitively before he began to paint.<sup>24</sup> But to a person who claims the intuition of a masterpiece, Croce says, "here is a pencil, draw, express yourself."<sup>25</sup> If art, intuition, expression, is an inner spiritual activity, how can such a test of the value of the intuition be decisive? And if it can in this case be decisive, then it must also be decisive in the case of Leonardo. What, then, justifies the dismissal of technique as an integral part of artistic creation? When technique and its products have been dismissed, nothing remains for criticism to work with.

In the externalization of his aesthetic vision, according to Croce, the artist moves within the sphere of the practical. The production of physical beauty (paintings, statues, and the like) for the purpose of preserving or communicating an intuition is regarded by Croce as an activity distinct from aesthetic activity per se. Technique is therefore considered to relate to the externalization of the work of art, not to its creation (its expression or intuition). A technique of actual artistic creation (intuition, expression) is unthinkable,

since aesthetic activity "is a primary theoretic activity,"<sup>26</sup> antecedent to any knowledge which might be of service to the practice of art. But if one's interest in aesthetics is an interest in art, and not, as with Croce, an interest in constructing a speculum mentis, he will be concerned mainly with this process of externalization.

The futility of this distinction between the internal work of art (intuition) and its externalization is manifest when Croce considers the relation of aesthetic activity and morality.

Art qua art (i.e. qua Croce's understanding of it) is immune to judgements of utility or morality; but the physical work of art is subject to such judgements, since its production involves an act of will. But the moral judgements of an artist's inner conceptions do not constitute a problem, since such judgements are impossible, the conception not being available for inspection. Admittedly, attempts have been made to exercise thought control; but a person's thoughts cannot be judged unless they are expressed by words, gestures, facial expressions, actions, or in some similar, external way. Similarly, an artistic conception must be externalized before it can be judged. Therefore, art, in the only form in which it can be made available for inspection and judgement, is yielded by Croce to judgements of utility and morality. Maintaining in theory the existence of pure aesthetic activity, Croce has nonetheless excluded the possibility of an aesthetic judgement. For as soon as aesthetic activity produces something for critical inspection and judgement, that thing becomes the object of

moral judgement:

Finally, it is only from the point of view of a clear and rigorous distinction between the true and proper aesthetic activity and the practical activity of externalization that we can solve the complicated and confused questions as to the relations between art and utility and art and morality.

We have demonstrated above that art as art is independent both of utility and of morality, as also of all practical value. Without this independence, it would not be possible to speak of an intrinsic value of art, nor indeed to conceive an aesthetic science, which demands the autonomy of the aesthetic fact as its necessary condition.

But it would be erroneous to maintain that this independence of the vision or intuition or internal expression of the artist should be simply extended to the practical activity of externalization and communication which may or may not follow the aesthetic fact. If by art be understood the externalization of art, then utility and morality have a perfect right to enter into it; that is to say, the right to be master in one's own house.<sup>27</sup>

Having construed the physical work of art as a stimulus for the reproduction of the original intuition,<sup>28</sup> and the aesthetic work of art as a kind of mental event, Croce is faced with the plain fact that the referent of critical terms is a material work of art and not an inner experience. He counters the difficulty by alleging that critical usage is elliptical:

Monuments of art, the stimulants of aesthetic reproduction, are called beautiful things or physical beauty. This combination of words constitutes a verbal paradox, for the beautiful is not a physical fact; it does not belong to things, but to the activity of man, to spiritual energy. But it is now clear through what transferences and associations, physical things and facts which are simply aids to the reproduction of the beautiful are finally called elliptically beautiful things and physical beauty. And now that we have explained this elliptical usage, we shall ourselves employ it without hesitation.<sup>29</sup>

I do not find this argument persuasive. In order to defend his distinction, Croce pretends to expose an error inherent in the customary way of talking about works of art. The fact that he is then content to go on talking about them in the same old way arouses suspicion. When Croce tries to deal with the problem of critical judgement, doubts about the legitimacy of his distinction become conviction that it is untenable. For after having disparaged the physical work of art as an unessential appendage to the aesthetic one, he is forced to recognize it as absolutely essential to the critical process. He construes it as merely a stimulus to the reproduction of the genuine aesthetic work of art. If he meant by this only that an aesthetic experience presupposes the reception of some kind of physical stimuli, and that a critical judgement presupposes an aesthetic experience, there could be no objection. But he means a good deal more than this. He means that the critic is concerned with two objects, a physical or material one and an aesthetic or mental one, and that it is the latter which is judged. If he is right about this, then he ought to be able to provide an intelligible account of the critical process which is consistent with the distinction he has put forward. And that, I think, he has failed to do.

When the entire aesthetic and externalizing process has been completed, when a beautiful expression has been produced and it has been fixed in a definite physical material, what is meant by judging it? To reproduce it in oneself, answer the critics of art, almost with one voice.<sup>30</sup>

One must ask what Croce means by "it" here. If "it" is



the thing made by the artist, it will, on this view, be judged by a moralist, not by an art critic. And if "it" is not what was made by the artist, the critic's remarks will be of doubtful relevance. However, we may momentarily concede for the sake of argument Croce's view that what is to be judged is the intuition (the internal expression), the physical work serving merely as a stimulus to reproduction. He says: "that the activity of judgement which criticizes and recognizes the beautiful is identical with what produces it. The only difference lies in the diversity of circumstances, since in the one case it is a question of aesthetic production, in the other of reproduction. The activity which judges is called taste; the productive activity is called genius: genius and taste are therefore substantially identical."<sup>31</sup>

This view appears to identify critical activity with having an aesthetic experience, and reduces criticism to the pronouncement, 'It's beautiful (i.e. expressive)', or the reverse, supported by an autobiographical report. But surely the aesthetic experience is the presupposition of critical work, and (when it occurs) is followed by analysis of the 'physical' work of art. Can it be supposed that a contemporary criticism of, say, a Shakespearian play or a Bach cantata depends upon the critic's reproducing the creative activity of Shakespeare or of Bach? How would the critic know he had succeeded in doing so? Because he found the play or the music beautiful? But that is what he wanted to determine. It seems that according to Croce, if the critical



activity of reproduction is a success, then the work of art must be also. For if the work is a failure, is not expressive, then the critic will surely fail to reproduce what has not in the first place been produced. From this it follows that all bona fide critical judgements must be favourable. If the critic should ever encounter a work of art that was not 'beautiful' ('expressive'), he would be deprived of the experience which Croce identifies with judging. A theory that renders adverse critical judgements unaccountable renders itself unacceptable.

Like Croce, whom he greatly admired, R. G. Collingwood developed his aesthetic theory in the belief that the question, 'What is art?' could be answered by showing how artists create works of art.<sup>32</sup> By 'artistic creation' Collingwood does not mean, any more than does Croce, the actual painting of canvasses or the actual writing of books, but some far more mysterious mental or spiritual activity which is said to precede the handling of the artist's materials.<sup>33</sup> This metaphysical conception of what a work of art 'is' would not, of course, be of any assistance to a critic who had to decide, for instance, whether a canvas submitted to an exhibition was a work of art or not, much less whether it was a good work or a bad one. Nor does Collingwood's theory of how works of art are created in the mind of the artist illuminate critical discussions of artistic composition which are always expressed in terms of technique, in terms of how certain materials are fashioned, in terms of the relations of notes or of tones, and

the like. This indifference to the physical structure of works of art leads Collingwood, as it did Croce, to the view that the term 'work of art' is properly applied not to physical objects such as painted canvasses but to mental events. The misunderstanding underlying Collingwood's divorcement of the aesthetic object (the work of art as experienced) and the physical object (the painted canvas or sculpted stone) becomes apparent as soon as one considers the actual sequence of intellectual events as they occur within the critical process.

The term 'work of art' is assigned to a thing because it is observed to be a thing of a certain kind, not because it is discovered that an activity of a certain kind was responsible for its production. A theory of artistic creation is no more necessary or helpful in deciding whether a given thing is or is not a work of art than a theory of automotive design is necessary or helpful in deciding whether a given thing is or is not an automobile. A critic would take a statue or a concerto or, in general, a work of art as evidence that activity of a certain kind, sculpting, composition or, in general, artistic creation had occurred. He would not need to produce an aesthetic object by reduplicating the creative activity of the artist in order to discover that there was a work of art in the vicinity. The work of art is already there, and would have to be there, before the kind of aesthetic experience Croce and Collingwood describe could occur. It is not true to say that by beginning and remaining with creative activity Croce and Collingwood put the cart before

the horse. They abandon the horse altogether. Since what they discount as mere physical objects are what critics refer to as works of art, they show themselves to be poorly positioned for answering the fundamental question of what critical statements are about.

Collingwood argues that since a work of art is produced by the imagination of the artist, the work must be an imaginary object, not a real one. "If the making of a tune is an instance of imaginative creation," he writes, "a tune is an imaginary thing. And the same applies to a poem or a painting or any other work of art."<sup>34</sup> The complexity of Collingwood's theory does not disguise the logical point that his separation of the work of art from "a bodily or perceptible thing, ... a painted canvas, a carved stone, a written paper, and so forth,"<sup>35</sup> and his identification of it with the "activity of the artist,"<sup>36</sup> is based upon a case of process-product ambiguity.

The mistake is inspired by the somewhat common-place thought that when an artistic conception is embodied in some publicly accessible work, that work will fail to convey what the artist had in mind to anyone incapable of interpreting the work. This is no surprising circumstance that puts criticism in a peculiar position; whatever is to be written about requires to be experienced with comprehension; but the comprehension does not, as Collingwood thinks, manufacture the entity concerned:

The artist as magician or purveyor of amusement is necessarily a craftsman making real things,

and making them out of some material according to some plan. His works are as real as the works of an engineer, and for the same reason.

But it does not at all follow that the same is true of an artist proper. His business is not to produce an emotional effect in an audience, but, for example, to make a tune. This tune is already complete and perfect when it exists merely as a tune in his head, that is, an imaginary tune. Next, he may arrange for the tune to be played before an audience. Now there comes into existence a real tune, a collection of noises. But which of these two things is the work of art? Which of them is the music? The answer is implied in what we have already said: the music, the work of art, is not the collection of noises, it is the tune in the composer's head. The noises made by the performers, and heard by the audience, are not the music at all; they are only means by which the audience, if they listen intelligently (not otherwise), can reconstruct for themselves the imaginary tune that existed in the composer's head.<sup>37</sup>

There is a difference between hearing music and imagining that one is hearing music for which this theory makes no allowance. There is something so odd about saying that what a man at a concert hears is noise and what he imagines is music that one must find it difficult to admit Collingwood's view of what a work of art is. This is just as well; for no one could consistently hold both that works of art exist sporadically in the imaginations of individual subjects and that critical statements are objective; for the second claim implies, for one thing, that they are about objects accessible to everyone who may wish to test the correctness of such statements.

There is more than one way to consider a work of art. A critic's business is to judge it, and he considers it from the point of view of an interest in its aesthetic value. Another

man may have to pack it, move it, install it in a church, or examine it for finger prints, and he therefore takes the same kind of interest in it as he would take in an object which no one would call a work of art and which he had to deal with in one of these ways. What we have here are two ways of looking at an object, not two objects. This is the simple point that I have been trying to make.<sup>38</sup> It is one that may easily have been lost sight of in following the tortuous windings of theories that are based upon forgetting it. Of the numerous eminent philosophers of recent years who have advocated the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy, Stephen C. Pepper, by stating the position in its simplest form in Principles of Art Appreciation, most clearly betrays the confusion out of which the distinction has arisen:

What the spectator perceives is not canvas and pigments but colors and shapes and a highly composed representation of a woman and her two children. The latter is the object of his perception. This object, which is the actual object of his contemplation, and which he wishes to understand and appreciate fully, we shall call the aesthetic work of art.

The aesthetic work of art is, as we have said, the direct object of his perception. The physical work of art is not literally the object of his perception. But it is very important for his perceptions, because it is what guides the spectator in determining what is relevant to his perceptions.<sup>39</sup>

It is not difficult to see how Pepper, who is conscientiously concerned to help people appreciate works which an inadequate knowledge of the structure of visual art has prevented them from appreciating, is led to this view. That a particular work of art considered as pigment adhering to canvas can

be for one person a source of exquisite pleasure and for another an object without significance is for Pepper a disconcerting fact to be explained and altered. As a person of sensitivity, with catholic taste and considerable technical knowledge of visual art, Pepper supposes that the Renoir he appreciates must be a different object from the Renoir that another person observes without interest, appreciation, or comprehension. But clearly the object at which Pepper and the other man look are one and the same. The distinction to be drawn is not one between an aesthetic object and a physical object, but one between Pepper's sensitivity, catholicity, and knowledge and the other man's insensitivity, narrowness of taste, and ignorance of technique. And it is upon this latter assumption that Pepper proceeds throughout the remainder of his book, no further use being made of the physical object/aesthetic object distinction, the author's concern being quite properly and exclusively to supply the reader with the knowledge he requires in order to appreciate works of visual art.

The invention of a bogus entity does not damage Pepper's book, for the usefulness of his instruction does not depend upon the validity of the distinction in question.<sup>40</sup> However, the theories of the other philosophers discussed in this chapter, as well as those of Samuel Alexander, Dewitt Parker, Bosanquet, and a host of others, do depend upon the legitimacy of the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy. Their insistence upon it has radical implications for theory of



criticism, for it determines their answer to the fundamental question of what critical remarks are about. By having accepted this distinction between the physical object and the aesthetic object, they are committed to the consequent distinction between the physical features and the value features of works of art. However the so-called physical object and the so-called aesthetic object are conceived, and the relation between them construed, it follows from the view that each work of art as experienced constitutes two objects that each work of art is also constituted of two kinds of features. Quite simply, the physical features belong to the physical work of art, i.e. to a material object constructed by the artist, and the value features to that which exists only in the awareness of a perceiving individual. The physical features are the so-called objective properties of the material work of art: the pigment, stone, or printer's ink, etc.; and the value features are the subjective properties of the percipient's experience: form, balance, rhythm, harmony, etc. This distinction between kinds of features provides the ground for that distinction between two kinds of critical terms from which the problem of explaining how aesthetic evaluations can be logically justified issues in an insoluble form. In the interests of solving this problem of logical justification, use of the physical feature/aesthetic feature distinction in critical theory should be discouraged. A brief consideration of the implications of the distinction may convince the reader that he gives up nothing but a nuisance when he discards it.

To recapitulate: by 'value features' may be meant features of a mental object imaginatively produced during an aesthetic experience which do not actually belong to the palpable object made (written, painted, chiseled) by the artist, nor to any copy of such an object, nor to any performance given in accordance with the artist's instructions. Unlike Leon,<sup>41</sup> who calls the physical object the 'work of art' and, in contrast, that which the spectator imagines the 'aesthetic object', most philosophers withhold the term 'work of art' from the object produced by the artist, using it synonymously with 'aesthetic object'. The difference between these writers is merely verbal; they are agreed on the cardinal point that in any case of a work of art being perceived, there are two kinds of features, each one of which is the property of two distinct objects or events. The physical features, as I have already said, are those which belong to an object or event which exists or occurs independently of the percipient, and the value features are those which characterize an object or event constructed in the mind of the percipient. Or, if one holds that all material objects, in so far as there is awareness of them, are constructed by the mind of the percipient, then the physical features will be said to belong to an object of consciousness which is perceived as any non-aesthetic object might be perceived, and the value features to yet another object of consciousness constructed by the percipient's imagination out of the material supplied by the first. This view implies two alternative conceptions of the nature of works of

art and of their creation. If the view is correct, either it must be supposed that the artist constructs an evaluatively neutral object which the spectator must endow with value. Or it must be supposed that the artist constructs an object possessed solely of physical features fashioned in such a way that they will ensure that certain value features will characterize a competent spectator's experience.

The first conception is, I am sure, demonstrably false, although it is not hard to see how it could arise. Between the relatively simple act of perception that underlies the recognition that this part of a painting consists of blue pigment on canvas and this other part of orange, and the more sophisticated act of understanding why these two patches of colour have been so placed, there is a difference which distinguishes the act of simply looking at a painting and noticing certain obvious sensible features and the activity of appreciating the painting aesthetically. The fact that certain persons can look at a painting and identify patches of orange and blue colour without understanding the artistic principles of organization that determined their inclusion and relative placement, i.e. without appreciating their function within the composition, leads to the view that the blue and orange pigment belongs to the physical or material work of art and the values of colour contrast and harmony to the mental reconstruction of the physical work by a competent spectator. Thus anyone who accepts the physical feature/value feature dichotomy without accepting the second of the alternative

implications mentioned above is committed to holding that a painter applies colours to his canvas capriciously and indiscriminately, without regard to the artistic values of colour harmony and contrast. This is so because it is the so-called material work of art that the artist paints, not the work of art that has its being in the consciousness of the percipient, where, according to this view, values come into being. No one, of course, would maintain either this or the equally fantastic notion of artistic creation in the other arts entailed by holding that the value features do not belong to the material work constructed by the artist. And yet the view that there are physical features belonging to the material work of art and value features belonging to the experienced work, the two works being in any instance separate and distinct although related, is widespread. The realization of the absurdities about the nature of artistic creation entailed by this position, and the fact that criticism itself makes no use of such a distinction, should be enough to discourage it.

It may be thought that the physical feature/aesthetic feature dichotomy can be salvaged by a slight modification of the theory urged in its defense. Instead of arguing the existence of two objects, of the thing created by the artist and of an object existing in the consciousness of the spectator, it may be held that only the first exists qua object, and that it is to this that the physical features belong. The value features, on this view, will be said to belong not to an object of consciousness but to the spectator's experience

itself, to the somewhat mysterious events which accompany and succeed the perception of a work of art. This version may entail a theory of artistic creation identical with the one just discussed, and be for that reason just as unsatisfactory as the argument it is intended to revise. Or it may be taken as entailing the second of the alternative conceptions of artistic creation mentioned above, namely that an artist constructs a purely physical object designed to elicit an aesthetic experience characterized by certain value features, in which case it may be discussed as being identical with that contention.<sup>42</sup>

The second alternative is less wide of the mark than the first, but nonetheless unsatisfactory. It implies that there are two views, a right one and a wrong one, that may be taken of the nature of works of art and of their creation. The first, supposedly the right one, maintains that the artist makes an object which possesses only physical features, but, when successful, so arranges these physical features that a competent spectator perceiving the work will have an aesthetic experience characterized by certain value features. The other view, supposedly the wrong one, is that the artist constructs a material object whose physical features are such, and are combined in such a way, that the material object may be said to possess in itself the value features. It might seem that the distinction between these two views is without importance for theory of criticism. Whichever view is taken, it follows that the work must be experienced in order for its

values to be discovered, which is true, and that the features of the material work must be cited as the cause or source of the values attributed to the work, whether these values are construed as actually attaching to the work itself or to the percipient's experience of it. However, since the actual reference of critical remarks implies that a work of art's values really belong to what the artist creates, irrespective of the character of this or that individual's experience of the work, the view that aesthetic values are strictly the property of a spectator's experience should be accepted only under the pressure of irrefutable arguments. I do not believe that such arguments have ever been put forth. It is certainly more in accord with the presuppositions of critical usage to claim that a work's values are embodied in the work to be discovered or perceived by whatever spectator has the requisite knowledge and sensitivity for appreciating the work. Critical presuppositions may, of course, be ill-founded, but concerning the locale of aesthetic values I do not think that they are.

In Types of Aesthetic Judgement, E. M. Bartlett states the problem as "how far the aesthetic object is identical with the work of art in the sense of a literal, material object, and how far it consists of mental constituents."<sup>43</sup> By 'mental constituents' she means those supplied by the spectator. Her approach to the problem is intelligent; beginning from the "common-sense point of view that the artist...constructs an object of one kind or another," she wishes "to consider these



objects first of all solely from the point of view of the artist. In all the current discussions of objective and subjective, mental and material, and so on, [she continues], there does seem to me to be a real danger of forgetting that after all the chief thing that we do in the appreciation of art is to look at pictures or statues, hear music, recite poetry or read novels, and that these objects are the result of a specific activity on the part of the artist."<sup>44</sup> This is a timely reminder, a word of caution to anyone who holds the view that the artist constructs the physical features of a work of art while the spectator by the use of his imagination supplies the value features. It is one thing to say that a spectator must use his imagination, as he must use his eyes or ears and intelligence, to appreciate the value of a work of art; but it is another thing to say the value of the work depends upon the spectator using his imagination or ears or eyes or intelligence. The second contention takes altogether too much away from the artist, who not only puts pigment on canvas but also puts it on in such a way that the picture will have aesthetic value.<sup>45</sup>

In Principles of Literary Criticism,<sup>46</sup> I. A. Richards argues that the value features ('form', 'balance', 'design', 'unity', 'texture', 'rhythm', 'harmony', are among the features he mentions<sup>47</sup>), to which reference is made in the statement of a critical judgement, are features of the critic's inner experience, and that the physical features ('pigment', 'print', 'marble', and so on), to which reference is made in

a descriptive statement, are features of the work of art. This distinction facilitates another between critical remarks, which are said to be about experiences, and technical remarks, which are said to be about works of art considered as objects. Since what Richards would have us believe, that critical remarks are not about works of art and that remarks about works of art are not critical remarks, runs counter to our customary notion of what critics write about, we must ask how Richards arrived at this strange and novel conclusion and whether it is worthy of assent.

The reader will remember that in Principles of Literary Criticism Richards offers an account of the experience which culminates in aesthetic judgement in the form of an outline to be filled in by psychology and physiology when these sciences are sufficiently developed to explain the complex and obscure events of aesthetic experience. It is these events, involving the sense organs, neurones, synapses and brain, emotions and attitudes, which Richards tries to describe as fully and accurately as present psychological and physiological knowledge permits. For the purposes of his inquiry, the work of art is regarded as a stimulus, i.e. as a cause of the experience to be explained. In order to distinguish cause from effect, stimulus from experience, Richards regards the work of art in a way quite different from the way in which a spectator would regard the work, and he describes the work in terms quite different from those a spectator would use to describe what he had seen or heard or read. The work of art is reduced to

its humblest properties, of canvas and pigment, printer's ink and paper, stone or marble, and the like; and certain other features, balance, texture, rhythm, and so on, are said to be features of the critic's experience, fallaciously projected into the work because of widespread ignorance of what we are talking about. Having made this split between what hangs on the gallery wall or stands on the library shelf and what the visitor to the gallery or the reader experiences - another version of the physical object/aesthetic object dichotomy - Richards is enabled to discuss value in psychological terms.

Though the tactical reason for this distinction is plain, the grounds offered are totally inadequate to support it. This deficiency is not attributable to carelessness or oversight but to what I consider the inherent impossibility of convincingly defending the distinction within the framework of a theory of criticism.

We may begin by considering Richards' allegation that "all our natural turns of speech" mislead us concerning what we are talking about:

It has to be recognized that all our natural turns of speech are misleading, especially those we use in discussing works of art. We become so accustomed to them that even when we are aware that they are ellipses, it is easy to forget the fact. And it has been extremely difficult in many cases to discover that any ellipsis is present. We are accustomed to say that a picture is beautiful, instead of saying that it causes an experience in us which is valuable in certain ways.<sup>48</sup> The discovery that the remark, 'This is beautiful', must be turned round and expanded in this way before it is anything but a mere noise signalling the fact that we approve of the picture, was a great and difficult achievement.<sup>49</sup>

The bald statement, 'This is beautiful', is, indeed, little more than a 'mere noise' when deprived of its context. I have yet to encounter this statement in critical literature, although it is common enough in philosophical writing about criticism - a discrepancy which perhaps accounts for philosophers finding it 'misleading'. But if this statement were used as Richards suggests, it would certainly have to be taken as being about a work of art. It could be considered to be about the effect of a work upon the speaker only if the speaker himself made this clear by saying, 'This music gives me a beautiful feeling', for instance. It appears that the 'progressive rediscovery of what we are talking about' has led Richards to deprive a simple statement of its natural reference. Any statement about a work of art containing the word 'beautiful' may be suspect, because of the difficulty of supporting the statement by reference to the work. But it is by reference to the work that the speaker must attempt to justify his statement if challenged.

Even among those who have escaped from this delusion [Richards continues] and are well aware that we continually talk as though things possess qualities, when what we ought to say is that they cause effects in us of one kind or another, the fallacy of 'projecting' the effect and making it a quality of its cause tends to recur. When it does so it gives a peculiar obliquity to thought and although few competent persons are nowadays so deluded as actually to hold the mystical view that there is a quality Beauty which inheres or attaches to external objects, yet throughout all the discussion of works of art the drag exercised by language towards this view can be felt.... Such terms as 'construction', 'form', 'balance', 'composition', 'design', 'unity', 'expression', for all the arts; as 'depth', 'movement', 'texture', 'solidity', in the criticism of painting; as 'rhythm', 'stress',

'plot', 'character', in literary criticism; as 'harmony', 'atmosphere', 'development', in music are instances. All these terms are currently used as though they stood for qualities inherent in things outside the mind, as a painting, in the sense of an assemblage of pigments, is undoubtedly outside the mind. Even the difficulty of discovering, in the case of poetry, what thing other than print and paper is there for these alleged qualities to belong to, has not checked the tendency.

But indeed language has succeeded until recently in hiding from us almost all the things we talk about. Whether we are discussing music, poetry, painting, sculpture or architecture, we are forced to speak as though certain physical objects - vibrations of strings and of columns of air, marks printed on paper, canvasses and pigments, masses of marble, fabrics of freestone, are what we are talking about. And yet the remarks we make as critics do not apply to such objects but to states of mind, to experiences.

A certain strangeness about this view is often felt but diminishes with reflection. If anyone says that 'The May Queen' is sentimental, it is not difficult to agree that he is referring to a state of mind. But if he declares that the masses in a Giotto exactly balance one another, this is less apparent, and if he goes on to discuss time in music, form in visual art, plot in drama, the fact that he is all the while talking about mental happenings becomes concealed. The verbal apparatus comes between us and the things with which we are actually dealing.... So it becomes natural to seek for the things these words appear to stand for, and thus arise innumerable subtle investigations, doomed ab initio as regards their main intent to failure.<sup>50</sup>

A page later Richards remarks: "We shall endeavour in what follows to show that critical remarks are merely a branch of psychological remarks and that no special ethical or metaphysical ideas need be introduced to explain value."<sup>51</sup> But an enormous metaphysical assumption is implicit in the passage quoted above. How, it must be asked, is it to be decided what is outside the mind and what is inside the mind?



Richards wishes to say that the pigments of a Giotto are outside the mind and that the balance of masses in the Giotto are inside the mind. But there is no evidence for the pigments being there, outside the mind, that does not derive from inside the mind. Both the perception of pigment and of balance are mental events. Until some grounds are offered for denying the objective status of balance while accepting that of pigments, both must be accepted on the same level as features perceived during the spectator's experience of a work of art.

Clearly, then, any statement about the nature of a work of art presupposes that the work has been experienced: the poem has been read, the picture seen, the music heard. It has been generally supposed that some distinction ought to be drawn between purely descriptive statements and statements which express an evaluation of the work. If this supposition is endorsed, the ground for such a distinction must be carefully determined. The ground implied in I. A. Richard's account is that the descriptive statements are about a physical object which is 'out there' in the world and that evaluative (critical) statements are about events inside the person, events caused by the physical object. This ground is plainly inadequate to support the required distinction. Either kind of statement depends upon the feature mentioned in the statement having been experienced. A statement about the size, colour, or material of a painting is quite like a statement about its balance, harmony, or composition in the respect that both statements depend upon the paintings having



been perceived by the person making the statement. It has always been supposed outside of aesthetic theory that both statements are about the work of art. Richards would like to correct this view by pointing out that the first statement is about the work of art and the second about the spectator's experience. But both statements are about the work of art, although experience or perception of the work is a necessary condition of either statement being made.

The lesson to be learned from this objection to Richards' argument is that the reference of a term is not determined by the psychological conditions presupposed by its use. It may be that the perceptions required to apply a certain type of predicate (an empirical one) to a work of art consist of a fairly rudimentary kind of sense experience, and that the application of another type of predicate (a critical one) depends upon a more sophisticated kind of experience. It does not follow from this that one type of predicate refers to a physical feature belonging to a public object, whereas the other type refers to a different kind of feature belonging to an object constructed by the mind of the observer.

This false inference yields the conventional distinction between two kinds of terms, descriptive and evaluative, used in critical statements about works of art. Unless this distinction is retained out of sheer thoughtlessness, it must claim to be grounded in a genuine dichotomy in the work of art itself.<sup>52</sup> When it is admitted that no genuine dichotomy between physical feature and value feature exists within the

work of art, the argument for two corresponding kinds of terms (and, therefore, for two kinds of statements) will have to be forfeited, and with it the main obstacle to showing that there are logical connections between the statements of any acceptable critical argument.

If works of art are taken to be those things which are made by artists and studied by critics, no work of art can be said to possess physical features and value features. Rather they possess the features which are constituted of the physical materials out of which the work is created, and these same features have a certain aesthetic value within the context of that particular work. Thus, what are supposed to be references to value features and what are supposed to be references to physical features are in fact references to exactly the same features.

It is, of course, possible to discuss the features of a work of art in purely physical terms, omitting any reference to the aesthetic value of these features. Such a discussion might have to do with the cost of the material, its durability, weight, or chemical composition, with a work's dimensions, and so on. Information of this kind may, of course, be critically relevant; whether a statue is made of clay or wood or marble can make a difference to its aesthetic value. But the possibility of making statements about a work of art which are quite indifferent to aesthetic value must be admitted. The admission is without importance, however. For such statements have no place in critical discourse. A

purely factual analysis and measurement of the physical sound produced by a string quartet would not count as music criticism. Conversely, critical discussion of the features of works of art are always evaluative in character, offering not merely factual statements about the physical structure of a work's material but rather assertions about the aesthetic value of this material and its arrangement. From the point of view of criticism, every feature of a work of art is a value feature; and every value feature coincides with some physical feature fashioned by the artist out of his material.

It is humiliating to return from this long excursion into aesthetic theory without any trophies of the order of those brought back by more ingenious explorers. Nothing has been discovered to compare with the "abstract and ideal entity" (Lewis), "the characteristic set of sense-perceptions" (Osborne), "the building up of an integral experience out of the interaction of organic and environmental conditions and energies" (Dewey), "expression, or spiritual aesthetic synthesis" (Croce), "imaginary objects" (Collingwood), "a system of norms of ideal concepts which are intersubjective" (Wellek), and other rare specimens captured and identified as the long sought work of art proper. We have come back to the starting point empty-handed, to the common sense view that works of art are to be found in libraries and galleries, in concert halls and theatres. This is a disappointingly ordinary view of what works of art are, but examination of more sophisticated

alternatives does not suggest that there is any vulgar error involved in it. The conception of works of art as objects accessible to any observer who wishes to check the correctness of critical statements made about them is of great service to theory of criticism. What must be remembered is that works of art differ from other objects in that they have aesthetic value; this is a matter of definition, a matter of what is meant by the term 'work of art'. Works of art can be described in the same factual way as other objects by anyone disposed to ignore what is special about them. But critics are intent upon just this aspect, aesthetic value, and therefore they describe works of art in terms of value. They do not write alternately about physical features and aesthetic features, unwittingly mixing remarks about two quite different kinds of thing. They write about one kind of thing, about the aesthetic value of physical features, and therefore, sometimes at least, write coherently. This point, so laborious to make because of the plethora of aesthetic theory to the contrary, had to be established before the following study of critical terminology could be undertaken with any hope of profit.

## Chapter 3

### Critical Terms

This study of critical terms begins with an argument against the usual method of classifying predicates. It protests against the common practice of drawing a sharp distinction between descriptive terms and value terms. This distinction provides a most unsuitable basis for understanding the function of critical predicates, and it is at the root of certain important misconceptions of the logical relationships holding between the statements of critical discourse. The implications of the distinction will be exposed and shown to be unacceptable, and an alternative system of classification will be proposed. Two merits are claimed for the new scheme. It takes account of the actual function which predicates must perform in critical assertion, and it provides the grounds for explaining the logical connections between the statements of critical argument.

The preceding chapter provides the groundwork of the argument to be developed here. If works of art were constituted of two distinguishable kinds of features, physical features and value features, then one might expect the language used

about works of art to employ two correspondingly distinct kinds of modifiers. An examination of some representative arguments for this distinction between features showed them to be lacking in cogency. Further inquiry into the nature of works of art led to the conclusion that the distinction was otiose and misleading. A major support for the clear-cut distinction between descriptive terms and value terms was thereby removed.

A descriptive term denotes (refers to or stands for) a physical feature or group of physical features, i.e. an empirical property or group of such properties. 'Marble', 'blue pigment', 'sonnet', 'cadenza', and 'dome' are examples. A value term denotes, if it denotes anything at all (or refers to or stands for, if it refers to or stands for anything at all), a value feature or group of value features, i.e. a non-empirical property or group of such properties - qualities or characteristics which are not actually observable but which a critic may judge to be present. 'Graceful', 'rich', 'moving', 'brilliant', and 'impressive' are examples. According to the view that I am opposing, the descriptive term provides no indication of the aesthetic value of the physical feature denoted, and the value term provides no information about any observable physical property. Descriptive terms and value terms are distinguishable by their referents and occupy separate classes. But if the distinction between referents is itself illegitimate, what grounds can there be for maintaining this distinction between terms?



It may be argued that the value term has no referent within the work of art at all. The attribution of such characteristics as gracefulness, richness, brilliance, or impressiveness to a work of art constitutes a deception on the part of critics. Such terms really refer to their own experiences, as Richards would say, or to a construct of their imaginations, as Croce and Collingwood would say. These attempts to divert the intended reference of critical terms have already been dealt with and, I think, shown to be unsuccessful. A different sort of attempt to sustain the distinction has been made by certain members of what may be called the school of logical empiricism. They argue that value terms have no referents at all. Their function is to express the critic's feeling about a work or attitude toward it, or to influence his reader's feeling about the work or attitude toward it. These are not views that I wish to accept, and I shall present my strongest objections to them in the next chapter. However, the groundwork may be laid here for the refutation of emotive and attitude theories. What is required now is a convincing argument for the view that the referent of all critical predicates is the work of art.

Works of art do not consist of physical features and value features; rather they consist of physical features which have value. The thousands of tiny dots of pigment with which Seurat covered his canvasses to a depth of three layers are, I take it, among the physical features of his paintings. Working according to a theory derived from his study of

traditional painting, optics, and the psychology of perception, Seurat arranged these points of coloured pigment in a way calculated to produce an aesthetic surface of great sensuous charm. The subtle colour gradations he effected are highly valued features of his work. But colour gradations (value features) can be distinguished from the bits of coloured pigment (physical features) which are graded only by the thoughtless kind of abstraction that would posit parallelism as an entity or quality independent of any pair of lines that might be parallel. Seurat's colour organization in A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte is, after all, the organization of bits of coloured pigment, and any critical reference to this esteemed colour composition is inescapably at the same time a reference to the physical material he used in composing his picture. To speak more accurately by ridding my language of all taint of this false abstraction which separates value from what is valued, I should say that any critical remark about Seurat's colour composition is a remark about the aesthetic value of the physical features.

There are not, therefore, two kinds of features providing separate referents for two kinds of terms. And even if for such metaphysical reasons as were discussed in the last chapter two kinds of features were posited, the distinction between terms could not be maintained. For many of the terms which would ordinarily be taken as descriptive would find no corresponding physical feature. If a poem as a physical object is construed as printer's ink on paper, then descriptive terms

such as 'epic', 'iambic', 'sonnet', etc. do not refer to the physical object. For acquaintance with the printed marks on paper would allow the use of only such descriptive terms as 'cr. 4 to ', '120 photogravure plates', 'white vellum', '.8 type', etc. Presumably none of those who advocate a distinction between descriptive terms and value terms would want to impose such a restriction upon the range of reference of descriptive terms. But if their range is extended, the force of the distinction is lost, because the distinction between 'printed marks on paper' and 'poem' is blurred. The genre, metre, and subject of a poem can be stated in evaluatively neutral terms. But the use of such terms presupposes an experience of the poem of the same kind as is required for the assignment of value predicates. The observation of purely empirical properties (printer's ink and paper) is not a sufficient condition for the description of a poem.

It must be concluded, therefore, that most of the terms used to describe works of art in an evaluatively neutral way refer to the same object, to the same complex of features, as the terms which express critical appraisals of them. If anyone chooses to consider the work of art which is denoted by critically irrelevant terms ('cr. 4 to ', '.8 type', etc.) as an object distinct from that denoted by critical predicates ('sonnet', 'rhythmic', etc.), he is free to do so. Such a decision is without importance for theory of criticism. What it is important to recognize is that most of the terms which would be classified as descriptive ('sonnet', 'quatrain',

'rimed', etc.) and those which would be classified as evaluative ('moving', 'deeply felt', 'subtle', etc.) refer to exactly the same kind of feature. Whether these features are construed as belonging to a material object or to a mental construct is a less urgent matter than the artificial division of these features.

It must not be inferred from the language of the two preceding paragraphs that I have been conceding the distinction which I set out to oppose. I have been trying to show that if the distinction between descriptive terms and value terms is accepted on the grounds of a corresponding distinction between physical features and value features, many terms which, on this view, are plainly not evaluative do not fit into the descriptive class either. In order to expound and criticize a certain theory of predicates, I have been forced to use the language of that theory, speaking of 'evaluatively neutral description', 'descriptive terms', and 'value terms'. But certainly I do not accept the view of predicates that is usually implied in the use of these words. I must now try to make my position in this respect quite clear.

Examining a list of critical predicates compiled at random, one would notice certain terms that were apparently better suited to descriptive than to evaluative purposes and others that were apparently better suited to evaluative than to descriptive purposes. But with what degree of assurance could the terms be so classified by inspecting them out of context? If one's purpose is to understand these terms as they function

in critical discourse, then the system of classification must be adapted to the characteristics which they exhibit in use. The classification of critical predicates is therefore an empirical task, and it would be only by chance that an a priori judgement would label them correctly.

Of the eight words, 'dark-green', 'mottled', 'yellow', 'linear', 'creative', 'rich', 'enhanced', and 'rhythmic', the first four appear to be descriptive and the last four evaluative. Consideration of a critic's use of these and similar words will show their character and relationships to be far more complicated than these labels would indicate. In an analysis of Grünewald's Crucifixion, Albert Barnes writes:

The figure of Christ - somewhat El Grecoesque - is of a general dark-green interspersed with brown and with ivory light, and presents a series of mottled color-chords. The face and legs of the Saint on the right are reddish-brownish yellow, they are modeled with light and shade, and have a rather wooden stiff solidity.... The distinctive trait is that color is used creatively: in each of the figures the actual hues as well as the manner of handling are different. The headdress, face, and hair of the kneeling figure are rich in color-chords of green and ivory-pink shot with light, and her salmon-pink gown is enhanced by flowing, rhythmic, linear patterns.<sup>1</sup>

Would it be correct to say that Barnes uses the words "dark-green," "reddish-brownish yellow," "salmon-pink," etc. solely to describe the colour of various parts of the canvas, as a botanist might use the same words to describe the parts of a plant? Or do these words also make an implicit claim for the aesthetic value of the artist's use of colour? I think that they do; for one of Barnes's reasons for saying that Grünewald uses colour "creatively" is that "in each of the figures the

actual hues ... are different." Alternatively, to say that Grünewald's use of colour is 'creative', which is certainly to evaluate, is not merely to praise; it is also to describe a composition in a highly general way as combining a variety of hues and techniques, which are features described in greater detail by the colour words and by such terms as "mottled color-chords," "modeled with light and shade," and "color-chords ... shot with light." Similarly, "rich" is evaluative, ascribing to the work a feature of greater aesthetic value than would 'drab', 'dull', or 'pallid'. But it is also descriptive, characterizing by a highly general term a colour surface whose hue, brilliance, and saturation is more particularly described by other words. A study of the other critical adjectives in this passage would reveal a similar ambiguity which prevents them from behaving as the two-part system of classification requires. Perhaps most striking of all in this respect is "El Grecoesque," a word clearly intended to describe a style of figure painting by likening it to the work of a well known painter, but at the same time, surely, intended by so complimentary a comparison to evaluate it.

Even this superficial analysis of four brief critical remarks shows the importance of studying critical terms in context. It also suggests two further objections against the descriptive term/value term distinction. Anyone who maintains the distinction may assume that any critical adjective must consistently perform either a descriptive or an evaluative function in all instances of its use. And he must assume



that in any particular context a critical adjective performs in either a descriptive or an evaluative way. Both assumptions are groundless.

It seems to me that the first assumption is required for the classification of predicates independently of their appearance in any particular context. Presumably anyone who says that 'good', 'beautiful', and 'great', for instance, are value terms and that 'bronze', 'Etruscan', and '5th Century', for instance, are descriptive terms means that the words in the first group are always evaluative and those in the second always descriptive. If he conceded that 'beautiful' may sometimes be used descriptively and '5th Century' evaluatively, his distinction between kinds of terms would be lost and his classification without point. But this shifting of terms from one class to the other is an event which must be recognized if two separate classes of terms are recognized. Consider the ambiguous status of the predicates 'marble' and 'bronze' in the following statement: 'Praxiteles' Satyr is marble and Duchamp-Villon's The Horse is bronze'. Whether 'marble' and 'bronze' are to be construed as descriptive predicates or as value predicates depends upon the context in which this statement is made. Suppose that workmen are assembling an exhibition of sculpture and have been told to group the works according to the materials of which they are made. If one of them asserts that 'Praxiteles' Satyr is marble and Duchamp-Villon's The Horse is bronze', he is using these adjectives in a purely descriptive way to denote the physical properties which

determine where the works are to be placed. These same adjectives may perform quite a different function in the context of a critic's discussion of the exhibition. Suppose that the critic agrees with Stephen C. Pepper's evaluation of sculptural materials:

Marble ... has dignity without coldness. It is the choicest in feeling of all the traditional materials. Its fine grain, its pure color usually white or ivory, its crystalline sparkle, make it a material of rare sensuous charm....

Bronze, however, ... is the medium that invites open composition and dramatic subjects.... Moreover, the metal emotionally suggests movement and activity.... Thus marble and bronze, the two choicest materials of large — scale sculpture, are in strong contrast with each other. The one invites stability and quietness, the other activity and drama.<sup>2</sup>

If the critic accepts this view of the aesthetic characteristics of bronze and marble, his use of the terms 'bronze' and 'marble' in the statement 'Praxiteles' Satyr is marble and Duchamp-Villon's The Horse is bronze' may very well be intended to make a claim for the value of the two works. The assumption that any term which might serve as a critical adjective must in every instance of its use be always either descriptive or evaluative is clearly false.<sup>3</sup>

The falsity of the second assumption, that in any statement a critical predicate must perform either a descriptive or an evaluative role, can be shown in the same way. This absolute disjunction between functions is essential to a clear-cut distinction between descriptive terms and value terms. If it were conceded that some critical predicates must play both a descriptive and an evaluative role in the same statement, it

would have to be admitted that no class had been provided for these predicates - a serious omission. And it is just this concession that must be made. Consider how the term 'imaginative' is used in the following statement:

His interpretation of Brahms's Concerto was imaginative.

Clearly the word 'imaginative' is used both to describe and to evaluate the violinist's performance. It happens that imaginative playing is admired and unimaginative playing is not; therefore, to call a performer's style 'imaginative' is to praise it in a certain respect, to express admiration for it, and to claim that it has a characteristic superior in value to playing which is correct but stilted and conventional. The word also serves to describe the playing, providing information about what the playing was like, distinguishing it from other performances which might be described as mechanical, dull, or perfunctory.

A preliminary statement of the negative aspect of my view of critical predicates can now be asserted in three propositions. The descriptive term/value term classification of predicates fails to account for the actual characteristics exhibited by critical predicates in use. The view that the descriptive/evaluative function of critical predicates remains constant regardless of context is mistaken. And the view that a critical predicate must either describe or evaluate but not do both at once is also mistaken.

One barrier against understanding the behaviour of critical predicates is the notion that all descriptive adjectives must

denote some specific property or particular feature of a thing. If this notion were correct, it would be necessary to find for every meaningful critical predicate of descriptive power a separable and identifiable feature or property to which it referred. Since no such properties can be found for which such critical terms as 'beautiful', 'moving', and 'rhythmic' stand, some other function must be assigned to these terms in order to distinguish them from adjectives such as 'pigmented', 'diorite', 'Middle C'. But once it is recognized that a term can describe without denoting a particular physical or material property, my view that a single term can be both descriptive and evaluative may seem more acceptable.

The double role here assigned to predicates is not a peculiarity of critical writing alone. In moral discourse also terms such as 'honest', 'loyal', 'sincere', 'brave', and 'good', which would be classified on the old lines as value terms, have descriptive force. They provide information about the kinds of acts which the person to which they are applied has been observed to commit in the past; and they are predictive, indicating what kinds of acts the person is likely to commit in any situation in the future. An objection may be made against the phrase 'kinds of act'. What can be inferred about the past or future acts of a man denoted as 'loyal and brave'? Simply the tautology that he has done loyal and brave deeds in the past and will probably continue to do them. The words give too little biographical information of a specific kind to count as a description, and the

question of whether or not the prediction has been fulfilled will be as much a matter of dispute as whether the terms were correctly applied in the first place.

The objection misses two crucial points. In any context in which they are likely to be used, these words will give a far more specific indication of the acts which a person has committed in the past and is likely to commit in the future than will the words standing alone. The statement 'General Gordon was very brave during the battle of Khartoum' suggests the commission of certain acts that would not be inferred from the statement 'On her first visit to the dentist, little Margaret was very brave'. As the context of such terms enlarges, the exact nature of the information they are intended to convey becomes clearer.

The second point overlooked is that what is taken to be a special difficulty about so-called value predicates must, if it is a genuine difficulty, also infect so-called descriptive predicates. The predicate of the statement 'In Winter, the North Shore Road is dangerous' is surely descriptive. It states a characteristic of a certain road at a particular season. But the information it provides about the condition of the road (whether, for instance, it is in the path of avalanches, full of pot-holes, icy, or whatever else) is no more specific than the information provided by the word 'brave' in the statement 'Sir Lancelot was brave'. If the test of a term's being descriptive is that it must denote (refer to or stand for) a particular observable property, then such words

as 'dangerous', 'inefficient', 'complicated', etc. must be excluded from the descriptive class along with 'honest', 'loyal', 'brave', etc. Surely no one would want so to exclude them, much less to put them in a class of 'value terms'.

Obviously the requirement that a descriptive term must denote a directly observable property is too strict. No one examines a man called 'loyal' nor a sculpture group called 'balanced' for special properties as a chemist might examine a substance called a 'carbohydrate'. But neither does anyone check the accuracy of calling a man 'strong' by examining him for strength features; rather he observes the physical feats which the man is able to perform.

To understand exactly what adjectives such as these mean in any instance of their use one must know the standards of loyalty or strength or goodness entertained by the writer. The strongest Pygmy may be weak compared with a Tartar of only average strength. The standards of loyalty accepted by one society may be far more stringent than those accepted by another. Nevertheless, it is possible to decide by observation whether, according to the standard employed, the term is correctly applied. A term such as 'loyal' is sufficiently constant in its denotation of a person who habitually commits certain specifiable acts that the correctness or incorrectness of applying the word in a particular case can be judged.

Similarly, the terms of critical discourse need not denote special properties in order for the correctness of their application to works of art to be verified. Works of art which are



said to be 'moving', 'boring', 'well-constructed', or 'beautiful' do not have special properties corresponding to these terms. Nowell-Smith has observed, "It is not the amusingness of the play that amuses me but the jokes and situations in it."<sup>4</sup> Nor is it the delightfulness of a vase that delights me, nor the movingness of a poem that moves me, nor the charm of a sonata that charms me. When such terms are carefully used, however, their contexts do imply a set of observations relevant to determining the correctness of their application. The characteristics cited must be accounted for in terms of the shape and colour and texture of the vase, of the rhythm and diction of the poem, of the harmonic structure of the sonata.

As with moral terms, one must know something of the standards which dictate a particular writer's use of critical terms. But this reservation does not apply exclusively to what have been called value predicates. Even such a modifier as 'long', which would usually denote a physical characteristic of an object in a non-evaluative way, must be applied according to a standard which is variable. Nor is there a special observable property of length. Rather 'long' characterizes the whole - as does 'moving', 'boring', or 'beautiful'.

In my view, then, it is misleading to separate critical predicates by herding them into one or the other of two logically distinct classes. The remainder of this study in critical semantics is intended to support my view that countless critical terms are hybrids, serving at once a descriptive and

an evaluative purpose. Many critical predicates will not fit into either the one or the other of the two classes admitted by the older theory until they have been forcibly deprived of certain meanings intended by their authors. What is required is a conception of critical predicates that allows for the fact that the ratio of descriptive and evaluative power is not constant for all terms and also for the fact that these predicates are homogenous in kind regarding their referent, import, and function.

A conception of critical terms as constituting a continuous range rather than as occupying one or the other of two classes represents, I think, a useful innovation. The terms at one end of the range will be primarily descriptive and those at the other primarily evaluative, but none of them will be construed as being wholly devoid of either descriptive or evaluative force. The greatest stumbling-block to understanding their function and therefore their connection in critical argument will thereby be removed. And the necessity for holding one theory to explain the use of what have been misleadingly called descriptive terms and another to explain the use of what have been called, also misleadingly, value terms will be obviated.

It is upon the old two-class distinction between modifying terms that the almost universally accepted distinction between statements of fact and statements of value is grounded. This distinction between statements gives weight to that philosophic scepticism about the validity of critical argument which was discussed in the Introduction. The problem of critical

statements is the subject of the next chapter. Here I wish to point out only that the distinction between terms is essential to the one between statements. If the semantic dichotomy can be broken down, then the notorious gap between what are taken to be two kinds of critical statements will be easily bridged. The problem of terms is therefore urgent. Upon proving their ability to perform a dual role of description and evaluation depends the central argument of the next chapter: that current misconceptions of the logical structure of critical argument arise from assuming a false distinction between logical kinds of critical statements.

Discussing the terminology of contemporary architectural literature, Katherine Gilbert observes that "there can be no doubt that the architects who use the words intend them to apply to real architectural designs, for description and/or appraisal. The words do not compose a 'literary' or 'subjective' characterization of architectural facts, but are clearly taken to refer to properties that inhere in those facts. Semanticists approaching this double situation of words and shapes would agree that the words are intended to describe and to evaluate architectural facts. They would assume that a verbal design parallel to the visual design was being constructed."<sup>5</sup> By showing that the same critical term may be applied by different writers to buildings antithetical in conception and style, Katherine Gilbert makes the worthy point that since a critic's language embodies his own sense of aesthetic values and not standard, impersonal meanings, it is important for a

reader to check "the values associated by the authors with the terms."<sup>6</sup> Concerning the duality of critical terms, the suggestiveness of her essay lies in her discussion of the word 'clean'. This word, she notes, is a favourite with Frank Lloyd Wright: "his ultimate sign of approval."<sup>7</sup> Taking only one of the various meanings distinguished, it will be observed that the word has sufficient descriptive power to be taken as denoting, for instance, a modern home (of the kind built by Frank Lloyd Wright) and not the residence of one's Victorian grandfather:

Its first value involves expulsion: ejecting the irrelevant. All architectural elements are then termed irrelevant that have no basis in actual human need but are lifted out of a bygone culture for sentiment or ornament's sake, through literary allusion, secondary meaning, or inertia; offering what was once fitting form for an epoch's habits after the habits are dead. "This clearing away of the historic debris, this stripping to the skin, was the first essential mark of the new architecture."<sup>8</sup> Architecture that is 'pure,' then, in deed and intention cuts away the fatty excrescences of the traditional styles, the classical orders, cornices, and embellishments. From inner equipment disappear old carved furniture and heirloom silver and china. The purists of architectural language throw out the moldy rhetoric of Roman banks and Gothic churches. Nuances of color containing the impurities of gray reflect for them a feeble and lingering fancy for dimly remembered shadows and compare poorly with clean heraldic colors.

First of all, then, 'clean' as an honorific term in architectural writing means relevance, and it becomes synonymous with 'logical.' A specific, practical purpose confronts the designer and his business is to build solely for that end. Here the value involved is concrete, practical, and verifiable. All the group of kindred terms that expand the idea of good logic belong with 'clean,' and dirt, as in the proverb, means something out of place. Close calculation, clear statement of what is wanted, and computation controlled by the limited, tangible, conscious goal sum up the intention.<sup>9</sup>

A statement denoting a building as 'clean', therefore, can be verified by anyone who knows what the term implies as surely as one describing it as built of red brick. As description, the statement is adequate: it signifies that a building has certain observable features and not others, thereby distinguishing it from buildings of another style. As evaluation, it is adequate: it signifies the kind of architectural features that the critic values, and it bears an implicit reference to a body of aesthetic theory where the critic's reasons for his criteria of architectural values are expounded.

The descriptive function of such words will, I think, be conceded. Any dissatisfaction felt about their evaluative role must arise from the mistaken notion that this is played independently of the descriptive role. But this is not the case; here one word must serve two turns simultaneously, for there is only one kind of feature to which a critical remark can refer. Works of art do not have physical features and value features. They have physical features which have value or lack it. Consequently any term referring to a feature of a work of art may serve both to describe and to judge that work. Many words, of course, do not fulfill a double role very satisfactorily. To say only that a statue is beautiful is not to describe it very well; nor is to say only that it is made of terra cotta to make clear the speaker's evaluation of it. But such laconic remarks are not sent alone into the world by competent critics.

Admittedly it is not always easy to decide whether or not



a critical predicate has been used correctly. 'Clean' is one of those words which belong about half way along the scale of terms, and therefore its descriptive and its evaluative intention are equally clear. Terms of higher evaluative power present greater difficulties. As their descriptive power diminishes, the difficulty of assessing their appropriateness through observation increases. The observations relevant to making such an assessment are simply impossible for people lacking critical judgement. The selection of appropriate terms with which to characterize works of art requires a special gift peculiar to critics; and some technical knowledge of the structure of works of art and of the critical vocabulary is prerequisite to understanding critical discourse. Similar remarks might be made about the qualifications for doing scientific work or for understanding it.

In the simplest, purely descriptive forms of scientific discourse, the correctness of each of the terms used to denote the empirical properties of an object can be checked independently of other statements by which other properties are denoted. Critical writing differs in this respect from pure descriptive writing. The meaning of a critical term (i.e., the characteristic(s) which it ascribes to a work with the implicit or explicit reasons for the ascription) can often be understood only after a study of the conceptual scheme of the critical argument in which it appears. For the critical terms within any single argument are mutually dependent, each getting its meaning from the context of the whole. Often the reader could



not know what a critic means by a term if he had only the statement in which it occurs before him. He must consider the entire argument before he can form any opinion about the critic's use of terms and, consequently, about the critic's judgement. This peculiarity of critical discourse accounts for much of its complexity. The more difficult aspects of the relationships between terms will be considered later. At this point the principle of the mutual dependence of critical terms can be illustrated by reference to a passage of relatively simple criticism.

In Art Through the Ages, Helen Gardner discusses the continuous frieze which runs around the top of the cella wall inside the Parthenon. The passage quoted follows a description of the figures represented and an explanation of the events which the frieze commemorates:

The cavalcade of mounted youths is filled with rhythmic movement and spirited action. The backward glance of some of the youths gives a balance to the general forward movement of the procession; and the infinite variety in the poses of the youths and the horses frees it from any feeling of monotony. There is a flat background with no distance and no unnecessary details. We have, in fact, all the essential elements of a procession of spirited youths expressed with a naturalism tempered by decorative fitness. Notice how the figures just fill the space; how the heads, whether the figures are standing or mounted, are on a level; how the flanks of the horses form a central band of largely unbroken surface, and their legs beat a rapid rhythm in the lower third of the panel.... On the slab representing the jar-carriers the insistent motif of a youth carrying a jar upon his right shoulder is repeated, making a design of decorative quality, ease, and grace of rhythm that is readily felt but only understood when one observes the subtle variations that occur in the pose of the head, the arms, and the hands, and in the arrangement of the drapery.<sup>10</sup>

The balance attributed to the composition is reflected in the statement made about it: "The backward glance of some of the youths gives a balance to the general forward movement of the procession..." 'Backward glance' and 'forward movement' seem to be straightforwardly descriptive. But would these features have been noticed and recorded by an observer who was not interested in balance? Probably not; for they support the claim that the work is balanced. 'Balance' is a characteristic relevant to determining the value of a composition. (Whether one prefers balanced or unbalanced compositions makes no difference to the relevance of this feature to making a judgement.) Since balance is a sculptural feature almost universally approved, it must be inferred that Miss Gardner's ascription of the term expresses a favourable judgement of the work in this respect. If she disapproved of balance, presumably she would have said so in order to forestall the most likely inference. 'Balance' is evaluative, but it also describes the relationship between the attitude of the riders and the movement of the procession in the same way as 'parallel' describes the relationship between two lines. In short, 'balance' describes the frieze by attributing to it a valued characteristic, the presence of which is accounted for in terms of other observable features.

The claim that the composition is free from monotony, a valuable characteristic, is supported by the observation that the poses of the youths and the horses are infinitely varied, **that** none is a replica of any other. Clearly the 'infinite

variety' ascribed to the poses of the youths and the horses is intended to be a term of praise as well as of description. And 'freedom from monotony' reinforces both intentions of 'infinite variety', describing the visual effect and assessing it. It might seem that the observations relevant to determining whether or not the poses are infinitely varied are of a more direct and immediate kind than those required for deciding the question of monotony. The ratio of descriptive power of 'infinitely varied' is higher than that of 'free from monotony'. But in fact both questions must be settled by exactly the same set of observations, for the logic of this argument is to advance the variety of poses as the cause of a lack of monotony. The descriptive power of the term 'monotony' depends upon the fact of what most people do find monotonous - for instance, a frieze in which all the figures in a long procession are indistinguishable from one another. Its evaluative power depends upon the fact that most people do not value monotony. (Anyone who did so, of course, would find the term equally informative.) Its use is justified by the remarks about the individuality of the poses of horses and riders. Its appropriateness would certainly be questioned if it appeared in this context: 'The total lack of variety achieved by making each horse and rider an exact replica of every other frees the work from any feeling of monotony'. It happens that people do not associate lack of variety with freedom from monotony.

The term 'decorative fitness' functions in a similar way.

Obviously a term of high evaluative power, it also provides descriptive information of a very general kind about the arrangement of the figures. This information must be supplemented by more particular, detailed remarks, and these follow in the next sentence. These remarks provide descriptive information, but their intention is to defend the use of the term 'decorative fitness', and in this respect their function is evaluative. Their point would have been most obscure without the clue provided by 'decorative fitness'. The remark, "the heads, whether the figures are standing or mounted, are on a level," might be taken as unfavourable criticism if the reader did not know that this distortion was being cited to explain how the sculptors achieved decorative symmetry.

Further analysis would reveal similar relationships between "a design of decorative quality" and "the insistent motif of a youth carrying a jar upon his right shoulder is repeated," between "ease and grace of rhythm" and "the subtle variations that occur in the pose of the head, the arms, and the hands, and in the arrangement of the drapery." But enough has been said to suggest the complexity of the contextual relationships between the terms of even a relatively simple passage of criticism. Clearly, no theory of terms which separates them by assigning to some one function and to others another is tenable. If critical argument is to be made intelligible, the nature and function of predicates must be explained in terms of their mutual dependence. An attempt must now be made to provide just such an explanation of the nature of this relationship.

The higher the evaluative power of a term applied to a work of art the clearer the indication of the nature of the critic's response to the work. If a critic calls a work 'pleasing', 'delightful', and 'amusing', readers infer that he has been pleased, delighted, and amused by it. Upon such inferences they base their predictions of what their own response is likely to be. This predictive value of critical adjectives derives from their dual reference. They tell something about both the critic and the work: that the work is such as to elicit a response of a certain kind from a particular critic, or, to put it the other way about, that the critic is the sort of person who responds in a certain way to such a work of art. If a reader finds that he is frequently displeased, disgusted, and bored by works that a certain critic calls 'pleasing', 'delightful', and 'amusing', then he must conclude that this critic's statements are without predictive value for him. It would have to be supposed in such a case that either the reader's or the critic's responses to works of art were peculiar or abnormal. If the vast majority of readers found the critic's predictions unreliable, only a revolution in the audience's taste would restore the critic's reputation.

The test of the reliability of critical predicates is not, however, the purely subjective one of agreement between the emotional responses of various spectators. Whether critical adjectives are being used appropriately or not is a question for intellectual judgement. Anyone who termed King Lear 'highly amusing' or Love for Love 'profoundly moving' would



exhibit deficiency in understanding plays or incompetence in the use of English words or both. There are sufficiently strict conventions for judging the appropriateness of responses to works of art and for the use of words to characterize the works to which these responses are made that it can be decided, in many cases, whether or not a work of art is aptly characterized. There are, admittedly, difficult cases, but the fact that some critical adjectives have high evaluative power does not constitute an insuperable difficulty. 'Amusing' and 'moving' are words with evaluative force, but it would be possible to decide, as in the instance just given, whether or not they correctly described the works to which they were applied. However great a critical adjective's evaluative force may be, it will, if appropriately used, convey information about the nature of the work. One may legitimately infer from it that the work has properties or features or characteristics of a certain general kind. It is the function of critical adjectives of higher descriptive power to indicate more precisely just what these properties or features or characteristics are.

There is no denying the occurrence, even the prevalence, of critical writing destitute of descriptive significance. One may encounter passage after passage of criticism phrased in such language that no means are available for ascertaining the appropriateness of the terms assigned to the works discussed. Critical language is literary, not scientific language; its terms are not so clearly and precisely defined as are those of



scientific discourse; the conventions governing their use are not as rigid. Nevertheless, critical language is capable of a precision sufficient for its purpose. By using words carefully, critics can provide reliable information about the works they discuss. But literary language has its dangers in criticism as elsewhere; when the well turned phrase is preferred to intelligibility, criticism becomes untrustworthy. The critic who writes with verve, with elegance, grace, and wit, but in such a way that no one can decide whether what he says about a work is correct or mistaken, may make an excellent contribution to belles lettres, but he will say nothing to the purpose of evaluative criticism.

The American music critic, James Huneker, has been praised as a virtuoso of style, and the following statements of his have been quoted in support of the verdict:

"In his gallery of psychological portraiture Strauss becomes a sort of musical Dostoevsky. He divines Maeterlinck-like the secret tragedy of existence and paints with delicacy, with great barbaric masses, in colors that glow, poetic and legendary figures."

"This [Zarathustra] is the vastest and most difficult score ever penned. It is a cathedral in tone, sublime and fantastic, with its grotesque gargoyles, hideous flying abutments, exquisite traceries, prodigious arches, half Gothic, half infernal, huge and resounding spaces, gorgeous facades and heaven-splitting spires - a mighty musical structure."

"Handel's music is like a blow from a muscular fist.... Mozart... made sonatas as God carves the cosmos ..."<sup>11</sup>

Such comments may have epigrammatic worth, and serve the useful purpose of inciting the reader's interest in the works

mentioned. But they do not make any assertion which an examination of these works would serve to substantiate or refute. The author of such remarks could never make the claim that Tovey once did: "I may say that no statement is made in any analysis of mine which the reader cannot verify for himself by following it in the score."<sup>12</sup>

The point here is not to object to figurative language as such. It is a critic's privilege to write as opulently as he pleases; and, further, certain critical purposes are well served by evocative, colourful, imaginative language. But the provision of reliable information about the features of works of art is not one of them. If a critic is to offer a literally significant critical description of a work of art, he must talk about it in terms whose appropriateness can be ascertained by others.

It is the case that some critics sometimes do not talk in this way. But it does not follow from this that no critic is ever able to talk informatively and objectively about works of art. It is quite wrong to infer from the unreliability of some writing about art that all critical terms of evaluative force are descriptively vacuous. This unwarranted inference lends credence to the fallacious view that whereas the predicates of empirical science are dependable for purposes of description, the predicates of criticism serve merely the subjective purpose of expressing or evoking feelings, emotions, or attitudes.<sup>13</sup> There are differences between scientific discourse and critical discourse which are important and

interesting, but it is a mistake to contrast them as discourse which, on the one hand, must be either correct or mistaken and, on the other, discourse concerning which no meaningful question of correctness can ever be asked. There is an important distinction to be drawn within criticism itself, viz. between critical writing which employs terms the appropriateness of which can be determined and critical writing which does not.

It may appear that some distinction should be drawn between those predicates which attribute some feature to the work of art itself and those which claim that the work is capable of producing a certain effect in the spectator. 'Graceful', 'balanced', 'well constructed', 'unified' are examples of the first type, 'moving', 'amusing', 'charming', 'pleasing' of the second. The terms of the second group do make more obvious than those of the first the fact that the person using them has experienced some responsive feeling toward the work. But I doubt that any distinction of logical importance is indicated by this difference. The kind of justification required for using the terms of either group is the same. The fact that everyone in the audience at the Odeon last night laughed frequently does not constitute a critical reason for calling His Night Out amusing. The term must be justified by reference to the play itself, to its events, situations, characters, and speeches, just as 'well constructed' would be defended by an analysis of a mural and not by an examination of the spectators.<sup>14</sup>

In Elements of Critical Theory,<sup>15</sup> however, Wayne Shumaker

distinguishes between "descriptive terms" such as "wooden," "unmotivated," "contrived," "frigid," "involved," "confused," which, he says, "can be tied to an objective correlative," and "critical adjectives" such as "interesting," "charming," "delightful," "repulsive," "deplorable," "displeasing," and, supereminently, "good" and "bad," "valuable" and "valueless," the "correlatives of which are subjective." "Each of the descriptive terms can be made responsible to a readily acceptable definition, and the appropriateness of its use in the context can be established by definition." But terms of the second group "describe human attitudes - attitudes, clearly, with value implications - rather than objective properties discoverable in literary documents."

Shumaker's distinction is perhaps not groundless; he may be right in saying that it is easier to get agreement on how the terms of the first group are to be used in literary criticism than on how terms of the second group are to be used. But this difference does not warrant any logical distinction between the referents of the two groups of terms. What is involved here is a difference in the degree of strictness of the conventions governing the use of words in a certain kind of context. His own remarks imply this explanation. He says, "It is true that one large aim of value studies is to determine the objective characteristics of the good and the valuable, the bad and the valueless, so as to make possible a confident discrimination between the good and the nongood. The aim, however, has not become an accomplishment, at least

so far as literature is concerned." But he continues, "While waiting for the achievement of a consensus about the objective correlatives of literary goodness or value, we must, therefore, regard 'good' and 'bad,' 'valuable' and 'valueless' as belonging with words that denote value attitudes and not with words that describe objective properties." But surely disagreement about which features characterize literary works of aesthetic value does not determine the logical status of the terms used in reference to these works; nor would the resolution of these differences alter the logical status of the terms in question. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between calling a critic's attitude toward a book 'deplorable' and calling the book itself 'deplorable' which is overlooked in Shumaker's analysis.

The crucial problem for any theory of critical predicates must now be raised in its most difficult form. Any question about applying a descriptive term to a work of art can be settled by observation. Although mistakes can be made in the observation of a work's sensible properties, there is no room for disagreement of a philosophically important kind about such facts as the colour of a certain segment of a painted canvas, the material of which a statue is made, or the key in which a passacaglia is written. Even when verification does not depend upon observation of a particular sensible property, the conventions for the use of words to describe works of art are as strict as in any other field of description. The term 'portrait' (when unqualified, as by 'pen' or 'musical', for

instance) is correctly applied only to paintings which take one or more human beings as their subject. All this is obvious enough. What seems not to have been so obvious is the importance of distinguishing between purely descriptive terms and critical terms of high descriptive power. A purely descriptive term used with reference to a work of art denotes some sensible property or group of properties which is open to observation of the same kind as is required for the description of anything else found in the world. A term of high descriptive power may denote the same properties or group of properties, but it implies that the property or group of properties has a certain aesthetic value within the work of which it is a part. Both the use and the confirmation of these terms require not only empirical observation but critical observation: one must be able not only to make accurate observations but also to understand the aesthetic function of what is observed. In practice, this requirement is not always difficult to satisfy; whether a term of high descriptive power ('balance', for instance, as used by Helen Gardner above, p.135) has been correctly assigned to a work is a question that can be decided with as high a degree of certainty as any other question that must be answered on the basis of observation. Terms of higher evaluative power cause more difficulty; the closer to the evaluative end of the scale that a term occurs, the more difficult it is to determine what observations are relevant to deciding whether or not the critic is right in applying it to the work. Not only are there no directly observable,



particular sensible properties corresponding to these terms - no properties of amusingness nor of unity that can be pointed out -, but the conventions governing their use are less rigid, more complicated and debatable, and less easy to specify than the conventions controlling the use of terms at the descriptive end of the scale.

In the past a great deal has been made of the unequal corrigibility of various terms and of the differences between the rules governing their use. The attempt to account for these differences has been the occasion of the two-class theory of predicates against which I have been arguing. Now it may seem that my notion of a graduated scale of predicates is no better equipped to solve the difficulty. But this is not the case, as I shall try to show.

The main contention behind the scale of terms theory is that no genuine critical predicate is wholly devoid of either descriptive or evaluative intention and power. The reason for saying that terms at the descriptive end of the scale have evaluative intention is provided by the fact that they appear in an argument designed for evaluation. This reason is sufficient. If a writer's intention is to evaluate a work of art, then his description of it, and therefore the terms he uses to describe it, must be construed as advancing that intention or be rejected as irrelevant. The reason for saying that terms at the descriptive end of the scale have evaluative force is the fact that they are selected by a critic because they are relevant to his discussion of a work's value. This

reason is sufficient. Any statement, and therefore any predicate, with which an evaluative argument can dispense must be regarded as either irrelevant or otiose. Any statement, and therefore any predicate, which is essential to an evaluative argument must have some degree of evaluative force however this force is exercised. Once an adjective is put into the context of a critical argument, it is no longer purely descriptive. The use that a critic makes of it destroys its neutrality.

At this point it may be remarked, perhaps by way of objection, that all I am doing here is to lay down a linguistic convention to govern the use of the term 'critical predicate'. This way of characterizing my theory of terms would not be altogether inaccurate, although it would be misleading if taken to imply that I am merely stipulating a definition without regard for the actualities of critical writing. What I am offering is a description of critical predicates, or a definition of 'critical predicate', which I believe to be in conformity with the logical character of this class of terms. When I say, for example, that an adjective which does not advance a critic's evaluative intention may not be considered a genuine critical predicate, I am not forcing the facts to fit an arbitrary definition; rather I am defining 'critical predicate' in such a way as to allow for the commonly neglected fact that there is a legitimate and important distinction to be drawn between scientific and critical descriptions of works of art. Critics and scientists have quite different ends to attain by the use of

language, and this difference in purpose manifests itself in a difference between the logical import of a critical adjective and a purely descriptive (empirical) one. Since what distinguishes the two kinds of terms is the evaluative force which is carried by critical predicates and is absent from empirical ones, an acceptable definition of 'critical predicate' (a correct description of critical predicates) must include evaluative force among the defining marks of a genuine critical predicate.

Similarly, to define 'critical predicate' in such a way as to exclude terms wholly devoid of descriptive force is not to make an arbitrary gesture for the convenience of a theory. I believe that many critical predicates which have been construed as descriptively vacuous are genuinely informative, and that it is proper to define 'critical predicate' in such a way as to admit only those terms which do serve to describe works of art in respect to their aesthetic value. In this way critical predicates can be distinguished from terms whose function is purely emotive or prescriptive, as some writers suppose ethical terms, for example, to be. The definition also provides the grounds for a distinction between authentic critical terms which really do contribute to a critical description of a work of art and pseudo - critical terms which are perfectly uninformative. It is important to make this distinction in order to correct the not uncommon branding of all critical predicates of high evaluative power as gratuitous.

The claim for the descriptive power of terms which occur

toward the evaluative end of the scale depends upon showing that the aptness of their use can be tested by observation. The difficulty is that such terms are often so general, denoting no specific sensible properties, that no particular observation seems to be relevant to determining the correctness of their application. The difficulty is raised by a misunderstanding. There are not two separate sets of observations, one set for descriptive terms and another for value terms, required for testing the soundness of a critical argument. Only one set is required. Just what observations this set comprises will be indicated by the terms of higher descriptive power. When critical predicates are construed as being successively related through their position on a graduated unbroken scale, it is understandable that the characteristics ascribed to the work by terms along one segment of the scale can be recognized by the observation of features denoted by terms elsewhere in the scale.

Although observation of a work of art is, therefore, always involved in the corroboration of a critical discussion of it, observation does not presuppose a one-to-one correspondence between predicates and properties. In order to understand the internal logic of critical arguments a principle of coherence must be introduced. For the correctness of the use of terms of higher evaluative power is a function of their relation to other terms which occur closer to the descriptive end of the scale. When it is understood that the criterion of the use of many critical predicates is their consonance with the other

predicates included within the argument, the inadequacy of a correspondence theory and the pointlessness of the objection raised by it are obvious enough. Construing all the predicates of a critical argument as being connected by their mutual performance of a single function provides the needed principle for judging the congruity of any predicate with all the others. It follows from this principle that the appropriateness of any term within the context of a particular argument can always, in theory, be determined.

To sum up my theory of terms: In critical writing there is no gap between the predicates of the kind implied by their customary designation as 'descriptive' and 'evaluative'. The nature of the logical relations between predicates must be explained if the structure of critical arguments is to be understood. A relation of correspondence is involved in the use of critical predicates, but it does not in itself explain the relationships between them. The classification of terms according to their relative degree of descriptive-evaluative power permits the introduction of a principle of coherence. This supplementary principle is what is required to explain the use of critical predicates and the nature of the logical relations between them.

The logical coherence of a critical argument depends upon the consistency of meaning of its predicates. When a reader of criticism refers to predicates of high descriptive power in order to get more precise and detailed information about the features which terms of high evaluative power imply the work

reviewed to have, he must rely upon all the terms being consistent in their descriptive implications. Similarly, unless the evaluative import of predicates of high descriptive power were consistent with that of terms at the other end of the scale, their confirmation would provide no support for the more explicitly evaluative terms. The condition necessary to this principle of coherence governing the relations between the predicates of cogent critical argument is provided by criteria of value.

Criteria of value will be discussed more fully in the final chapter. It is sufficient at this point to say that they provide readers with grounds for inferring the critic's meaning from the terms he uses. Anyone acquainted with Frank Lloyd Wright's criteria of value, for example, will be able to infer from his critical use of the word 'clean' that the building referred to has certain recognizable features which Wright values. Whenever that word occurs in a passage of criticism by Wright, or by anyone else who is known to accept his criteria, the reader will be able to judge whether it is used consistently with both the predicates of higher descriptive power and of higher evaluative power.

Persuasive arguments have been put forth for the necessity of distinguishing between the meaning of 'good' and the criteria for its application.<sup>16</sup> A person can understand what is meant (in one sense of 'meaning') by 'good' in the statements 'This is a good whaleboat', 'This is a good portrait' without knowing anything about the criteria used for judging whaleboats or



portraits. He will understand that the whaleboat and the portrait are being commended, and, if he wishes to add to his fleet or to his collection, that he could do worse than to buy either of these. He will understand, in short, that the speaker means to praise the boat and the picture and not to condemn the one as unseaworthy and the other as incompetently painted. Knowing only that 'good' is a word of commendation, the argument runs, a person can understand what is meant by applying the adjective to any object, even though he is totally ignorant of the features that make such an object a good one of its kind.

This analysis seems to be correct as far as it goes. But it goes only far enough to show what is common to all uses of 'good', i.e., to explain its commendatory function. To understand what a critic means by 'good' in any particular context, information of another order is required, viz., information about the criteria implicit in his reasons for praising the thing. A knowledge of the dictionary meaning of 'good' is a necessary condition for grasping a critic's conclusion, but it is hardly sufficient for following his argument. Criteria are, to use a phrase of current philosophical jargon, part of the 'contextual background' of critical statements. It is by reference to them that the transitions from predicate to predicate are to be explained. And it is in terms of them that what a critic means by calling a work 'good' must be explained also. If one wishes to know only what 'good' means regardless of context, then its meaning can be distinguished from the

criteria for its application. But if one wishes to know what a critic means by 'good' in a particular context, then criteria cannot be excluded from the explanation.

R. M. Hare illustrates that logical peculiarity of value words which is sometimes described by saying that they are the names of 'supervenient' or 'consequential' properties.<sup>17</sup> He considers two pictures, P and Q, one of which is an exact replica of the other, and notes that one cannot say "'P is exactly like Q in all respects save this one, that P is a good picture and Q not.'" <sup>18</sup> From the logical impossibility of saying of two paintings that they are identical in all respects except that of their 'goodness', it follows, apparently, that the goodness of a painting depends upon other discernible characteristics, and that the term 'good' is logically dependent upon (is entailed by) the other terms used to denote the work's features. But Hare will not accept this inference. He contrasts the logic of 'good' with that of 'rectangular' in order to show that the conditions of entailment present in the latter word are missing from the former. It cannot be said of two paintings that "'P is exactly like Q in all respects save this one, that P is a rectangular picture and Q not,'" <sup>19</sup> if 'all respects' is intended to include the measurements of its angles. 'Rectangular' is synonymous with 'rectilinear and right angled'. Therefore, if one picture is rectangular and the other is not, the angles of one picture must differ from those of the other, in accordance with the meaning of 'rectangular', and the statement about their sameness is

self-contradictory. 'Good' as applied to a painting, differs from 'rectangular' in that there are no definable characteristics of good paintings of such a kind that in any instance the goodness of a painting follows analytically from a statement of its characteristics. I.e., the statement 'This painting has characteristics a, b...n' does not entail the statement 'This painting is good' as the statement 'This figure is rectangular and all its angles are of ninety degrees' entails the statement 'This figure is rectangular'.

This difference in the logical situation of 'good' and 'rectangular' is explained in terms of meaning. Such is the meaning of 'rectangular' that it is entailed by a certain statement about a thing's angles. Such is the meaning of 'good' that it is never entailed by any statement or series of statements about a thing's features. Apart from the mistaken assumption already disposed of that the inference to 'good' must be made from a set of purely factual premises, Hare's argument depends upon a sense of the term 'meaning' which must be questioned. If one accepts his view of what 'good' means, then his argument will appear very damaging to the theory of critical implication to be presented in Chapter 5. By introducing a distinction between two senses of the word 'meaning', however, the theory can be protected.

There are at least two different questions that may be asked about the meaning of a word. One may ask for a definition of a word or one may ask what a writer means by it. The second question is open to several interpretations, but the

relevant one here is equivalent to asking a writer what reasons he has for using the word in a particular context. To ask a writer to define one of his terms is in some cases to ask for information of a different kind than that requested when asking him his reasons for using a certain word on a particular occasion. It happens that the definition of some words constitutes the reason for using it. Thus the reason for calling a thing rectangular is that it is rectilinear and all of its angles are of ninety degrees. In the case of other words, 'good', for instance, their definition does not constitute the reason for using them, or at least it constitutes a very imprecise and therefore poor reason. For words that must perform in a great variety of dissimilar contexts new reasons must be produced upon each occasion that they are used.

On the assumption that it is a definition which must always constitute the reason for using a word it is impossible to justify the use of certain words (e.g., 'good') on the grounds of their meaning. For then it is required that the same reason be offered to justify each use made of any one of them. This is the assumption that Hare makes. Consequently, when he considers the meaning of 'good' he looks for a definition which will hold regardless of context as the definition of 'rectangular' does. He asks if there are "'defining characteristics' of a good picture,"<sup>20</sup> how, in general, a good picture should be defined. He does not ask what characteristics this picture has that leads this critic to call it good, what reasons the critic has given for concluding his argument with this word.

Since a critic's reasons for calling works 'good' are in every case different, what he means by 'good' is in every case different also. What critics mean by 'good' cannot be understood by looking at a model derived from geometry where the reason for calling a thing rectangular is always the same. Having adopted this model, Hare asks for a definition, 'What is the meaning of "good" in general?' instead of for reasons, 'What does he mean by calling this particular picture "good"?'

If by the meaning of a term is understood its definition, then a critic's remarks do not entail his value judgement. A word such as 'good' is applicable to so many dissimilar things and events that its definition must be made so general that no constant set of characteristics of a specific nature can be inferred from it. Its definition provides no adequate criterion for the correctness of its use. However, if by 'meaning' is understood the reasons a writer has for using 'good', then the notion of entailment can properly be introduced to describe the relation between statements with predicates of high descriptive power and statements containing predicates of high evaluative power such as 'good'. In valid critical arguments statements of the former kind entail statements of the latter kind because the former statements constitute the reasons for the latter. Apart from the former statements, the latter are meaningless in the sense of 'meaning' relevant to interpreting words in use in critical discourse. Considered together in the context of a single argument, a critical predicate is said to be entailed by those which constitute the reasons for using it, and which,

therefore, on this view, constitute its meaning.

It does not seem to me, therefore, that a highly general, wholly abstract account of what any particular predicate always means is likely to contribute much toward an understanding of critical discourse. However, many such discussions of so-called value predicates, 'good' and 'beautiful' especially, have been offered as contributions toward value theory. Even in the arguments of philosophers who think that the naturalistic attempt to define 'good' in non-evaluative terms is misguided, the quest for a philosophic definition of 'good', for its meaning independent of any particular instance of its use, is apparent. The allegedly decisive question raised by these arguments is about what the speaker has in mind whenever he uses 'good' or 'right' or some such word. The assumption is, apparently, that there is some mental constituent common to all cases in which people judge things good or right or valuable in some other way. Thus W. D. Ross argues on this ground against the definition of 'right' as 'more evolved' proposed by the evolutionary doctrine of ethics: "There is really no resemblance between the characteristic which we have in mind when we say 'right' or 'obligatory' and that which we have in mind when we say 'more evolved'..."<sup>21</sup> And G. E. Moore, who was, of course, clearly aware of the difference between saying what 'good' means and what good is, affirms, "My business is solely with that object or idea, which I hold, rightly or wrongly, that the word 'good' is generally used to stand for."<sup>22</sup> And ten pages later he remarks, "But whoever will attentively



consider with himself what is actually before his mind when he asks the question 'Is pleasure (or whatever it may be) after all good?' can satisfy himself that he is not merely wondering whether pleasure is pleasant. And if he will try this experiment with each suggested definition in succession, he may become expert enough to recognize that in every case he has before his mind a unique object...."23

C. D. Broad admits that it might be "extremely difficult" to justify the assumption "That there is a certain one characteristic which the person who asks the question what 'good' or some other name (N) means is thinking of whenever he uses the word N in certain kinds of contexts,"24 or "that all or most other people who speak the language of the questioner correctly are thinking of the same characteristic as he is thinking of whenever they use the word N in the same kinds of context."25 For the sake of his analysis of G. E. Moore's conception of a non-natural characteristic, however, he supposes that the assumption can be justified. And throughout the remainder of his discussion he repeatedly raises the question of what a person 'has in mind' whenever he uses the word 'good'.26

Confining the discussion to critical remarks, it seems apparent that what a person 'has in mind' when he calls works of art 'good' is not necessarily the same in every case. For what he will have in mind, presumably, are the features of the work that he is judging. And these features are not in every case the same. Therefore, if what he 'means' by 'good' is a question of what 'he has in mind' when he calls works 'good',

it must not be supposed that he means the same thing every time he uses the word. It may be supposed, however, that in every such case he means to express a favourable judgement of the work. And one thing that he always 'has in mind' on these occasions is the intention of expressing such a judgement. In so far as this intention can be formulated in words, 'This is good' serves as well as any synonymous formulation. On a familiar sense of 'meaning', the question 'What do you mean by calling this work "good"?' may be taken as equivalent to the question 'Why do you call this work "good"?' or 'What reason do you have for calling this work "good"?' Thus if one wishes to understand what critics mean by the judgements they make in the sense of understanding what reasons they have for these judgements, the question of what they mean whenever they judge a work to have a certain kind of value is beside the point. For the answer would never explain what reasons a critic had for any particular judgement, and what it explains about judgements in general is too obvious to require any explanation. There may be other senses of 'meaning' that would render an investigation of the meaning of predicates such as 'good' more profitable. But such investigations would not, as far as I can see, elucidate the logic of critical discourse. For in so far as this particular logical problem is a problem of meaning, it is a problem of the meaning of terms in context. And this problem cannot be solved by reasoning which stays aloof from all particular contexts.

If it is correct to say that the common factor approach to

critical predicates is unprofitable, then it seems also correct to say that it is likely to be misleading. For if the analysis of 'good' fails to provide a satisfactory statement of what is in the speaker's mind whenever he uses 'good', the analyst is tempted to make up for this deficiency by supplying the constant. Broad mentions past failures to discover an equivalent for 'good' in non-evaluative terms: "And all analyses of goodness in purely non-ethical terms ... seem to most people to be too complex to be correct analyses of what they have in mind."<sup>27</sup> On the next page, expressing a view that he has not decided to accept personally, he adds: "It may be that the explanation is simply that the name of the original characteristic has acquired a certain interjectional, rhetorical or emotional force which is lacking in the phrase that expresses the analysis."<sup>28</sup> Even if it were true that 'good' always had 'interjectional, rhetorical, or emotional force', this part of its meaning, that common to all uses, is the least interesting logically. And, as I tried to show in Chapter 1, the view that value predicates express emotions rather than judgements does not constitute any advance nor provide any useful hypothesis for explaining the logic of critical arguments. Even if the reader is satisfied that 'good' expresses a favourable judgement, or if he is satisfied that it expresses emotion, he still wants to know in any particular instance what it means in the other sense, in the sense of the reasons that justify its use. And what the logician wants to discover is in what sense of logical justification reasons of this kind can ever

be said to justify such usage. But it will be impossible to discover this once the critic's predicates have been subjected to the surgery that severs their descriptive from their evaluative function.

Writers expressly concerned with problems of the aesthetic judgement also persist in the quest for definitions. In the Introduction to his recent Aesthetics and Criticism, Harold Osborne says of the critic that "when he makes statements of the form 'this is good', he is, ostensibly at any rate, uttering an objective judgement about the work of art. Yet his statement will remain indeterminate and no more than a meaningless conglomeration of words until it is known what he means by 'good' as applied to works of art."<sup>29</sup> In Herbert Read's The Meaning of Art, the title of which advertises the author's concern with abstract meanings, one encounters at the beginning the phrases "Definition of art" and "Definition of beauty" standing as chapter headings. "There are at least a dozen current definitions of beauty," Read says, "but the merely physical one I have already given (beauty is a unity of formal relations among our sense-perceptions) is the only essential one...."<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that the original definition to which he refers mentions not 'beauty' but 'the sense of beauty'.<sup>31</sup> This phrase, borrowed perhaps from the title page of a book by Santayana,<sup>32</sup> like the phrase 'what one has in mind' in the theories considered above, reflects the psychological direction of the inquiry. Lascelles Abercrombie pursues the same course, and his work is interesting as a characteristic

example of failure to find a common factor definition of a critical term leading to a subjectivist standpoint. He asks:

What is this sense of beauty? Is it the sense of some quality persisting through all the multitudinous forms which beauty can take? If so, no wonder aesthetic science has so far been puzzled to account for it. But - here brevity requires the airs of dogmatism - beauty is not a quality of things. The sense of beauty is the sense of ourselves passing the final aesthetic judgement on certain crucial forms of pure experience. By virtue of it we completely experience the complete judgement of experience. This may not greatly diminish the puzzle of beauty: but it at least shows us where to look for its elucidation - in ourselves. It absolves us from the difficulty of taking beauty as a thing perceived: the difficulty, namely, of showing what is the factor common to the infinite variety of 'beautiful perceptions'.<sup>33</sup>

Having distinguished 'beauty' and 'the sense of beauty', Abercrombie concerns himself with the latter, attempting to state the conditions under which the sense of beauty is experienced. What he says about these conditions which underly the difference between aesthetic judgements and moral or scientific judgements seems to me to be sound. The question is whether he is right in supposing that an investigation of the experiences which people have in the presence of beautiful works would dispose of problems about the nature of beautiful works themselves. I think that he is wrong about this; for the kind of event which introduces the term 'beauty' into discourse can be approached by investigating either the experience or the thing experienced. These investigations, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, are respectively psychological and critical. Both are legitimate, but "the final aesthetic judgement" ('This is beautiful' - a critical remark) is passed upon the thing



experienced, not upon the experience itself, which is merely a condition of making the judgement.

Abercrombie supposes that unless the problem of beauty is construed as a psychological problem it can only be solved by finding some factor which is common to all things called 'beautiful'. The difficulty of isolating such a quality and characterizing it in terms which are at once sufficiently specific to make the recognition of the quality in any instance possible and sufficiently general to be applicable to works of art of all kinds is at last widely recognized and probably insuperable.<sup>34</sup> But it does not follow from construing the predicate 'beautiful' as applying to works of art rather than to experiences that the so-called problem of beauty can only be solved by discovering some quality shared by all beautiful things. Such an awkward entailment derives from making the problem of beauty an abstract problem, remote from any particular use of the word 'beautiful'. 'Beautiful' is a common term of critical usage, and its meaning, as a word used in writing about art, is to be understood by a study of the contexts in which it appears. There seems to be no reason for supposing that the term always means the same thing. If by 'meaning' here is meant the artistic factors (i.e. features) ascribed to a work by the term, apparently it does not. But to make 'beautiful' refer to the percipient's experience rather than to the thing he perceives is not the only way around this difficulty. To understand what a critic means by 'beautiful' in any instance of his using the term is, as I have said, to



understand his reasons for predicating it of a work of art. These reasons are expressed in terms which refer to the particular work he is considering, and it is not to be expected that they will be applicable to every other work. What 'beautiful' means is what a critic on some particular occasion means by it: to ask him what he means by calling a work 'beautiful' is to ask him what reasons he has for doing so - at least this is the only intelligible and answerable question about beauty in relation to criticism of art that I can think of. This is not to deny the legitimacy of psychological investigations of that experience which one has in the presence of works of art which one calls beautiful. 'Is there some factor common to all such experiences?' may very well be a question that the psychologist must consider. But if a writer chooses to deal with things rather than with experiences, he cannot say what beauty is without citing those features which make a particular work of art beautiful. Since some of the works within restricted fields do share features in common (balance, rhythm, unity, e.g.) it is possible to generalize to some extent about what makes works of a certain kind beautiful. But such generalization can hardly be carried to the point of setting forth the defining characteristics of all beautiful works of whatever kind. Nor is there any need for a definition of such inclusiveness. If the context of the problem about beauty is set by an attempt to understand criticism, then what must be investigated is how the term 'beautiful' functions in critical statements, how it is related to other terms in the

same argument, and what are the determining conditions of its correct ascription to works of art.

It may now appear that this inquiry into critical terms is leading to paradoxical conclusions. It is held that in the sense of 'meaning' relevant to understanding critical argument, predicates are to be defined in terms of the reasons given for their use. Apparently, then, every time that a critic uses a predicate such as 'good' or 'beautiful' he redefines it, making it stand for adjectives which he has predicated of the work during the course of his argument. In this case, it seems that a critic could never be wrong in calling a work 'good' or 'beautiful'. For he simply makes these words mean just what his argument requires that they should mean. Nor would he be contradicted by another critic who called the same work 'bad' or 'ugly'; for by 'good' and 'beautiful' he does not mean what the other critic means but is using the words in a sense peculiar to himself.

This objection results from equivocation on the two senses of 'meaning' already distinguished. What must be meant by saying that 'a critic could never be wrong in calling a work "good" or "beautiful"' is that in respect to these terms a critic could never be convicted on grounds of usage of misusing language. And this is so; for neither common usage nor the lexicographer provides an adequate criterion for determining whether such a term is correctly or incorrectly applied to a work of art. Admitting this, however, does not commit one to the view that a critic could never be wrong in any sense

applying the terms in question to a work of art. If one should substitute 'bad' or 'ugly' for these terms in the concluding statement of almost any piece of criticism, they would appear so incongruous with the predicates of the logically prior statements that any reader would certainly conclude that something had gone wrong with the argument. Critical predicates of high evaluative power neither are nor are they taken here to be gratuitous, irresponsibly inserted into the concluding statements of critical arguments and immune to correction because related analytically to other predicates as a symbol is related to its defining terms. It is held that part of what a critic means by calling a work 'good' or 'beautiful' is that the work is possessed of the features attributed to it by predicates which belong closer to the descriptive end of the scale. Thus one way that a term of high evaluative power can be tested is by observing the work to see if it is possessed of the specified features. After this test has been made, questions about the adequacy and relevance of the criteria by which these particular features are associated with terms like 'good' and 'beautiful' arise. The fact that discussion of these questions does not always settle them to everyone's satisfaction does not argue that there is no distinction between the use of a critical predicate justified by cogent argument and an arbitrary use of it. What does follow from the version of meaning advocated here is that the question of whether or not a critic is right in assigning a predicate of high evaluative power to a work of art is equivalent to the

question of whether the reasons included in his argument justify his use of the term. But this question cannot be answered until the notion of justification as it applies to critical arguments has been clarified; and this clarification, in turn, depends upon a clearer conception of the logical structure of critical argument than has so far been made available. The present attempt at clarification may now be advanced by turning to a study of critical statements.

## Chapter 4

### Critical Statements

My theory of critical terms provides the lever for ridding critical discourse of the traditional distinction between statements of fact and statements of value. Once the distinction between descriptive predicates and value predicates has been disposed of as illegitimate, no grounds are left for maintaining the corresponding distinction between statements. This consequence obviously follows, and it is of extreme importance. When the traditional dichotomy between the statements of critical argument has been eliminated, the traditional problem about their logical relationships can be solved. I shall therefore try to support the view of critical statements implied by my theory of predicates by adapting the arguments of the last chapter to a study of critical assertion. I shall exhibit the erroneous presuppositions involved in the attempt to apply the distinction to critical discourse, and show by reference to critical literature that it is not in fact applicable. Then I shall set forth the problem of the logical relations between the statements of critical argument as it is understood by certain philosophers who assume the distinction in question. The

proposals they make for solving the problem will be examined and shown to be solutions to an artificial problem created by their own unnecessary logical distinction between kinds of statements and to depend for their apparent cogency upon this same mistaken distinction. A statement of the problem of the logical relationships of critical argument consonant with the nature of the remarks actually made in critical literature will be provided and a solution to the problem offered. The theory in which this proposed solution is embodied will then be tested by applying it in the logical analysis of a critical argument.

A statement of fact may be defined as a statement which asserts a potentially verifiable proposition about a thing or event, its predicate describing a physical feature (empirical property) or group of physical features or some observable relation between two or more such features. Examples are: 'George de la Tour's Madelaine repentante is almost completely monochromatic'. 'The colours used are in the key that is nearest to the blacks and grays and whites of pure tone'. 'All the lower part of the picture is of the darkest tint and almost undetailed'. Such statements provide the kind of information about a work of art that would be useful for purposes of identification.

A value statement expresses a judgement of the worth of a thing or event or of some part of either, its predicate denoting, if it denotes anything at all (referring to or standing for, if it refers to or stands for anything at all), a value feature (a non-empirical property) or group of value features or some aesthetically valuable relationship judged to hold



between two or more of the work's features. Alternatively, a value statement may be taken as expressing the writer's feeling or attitude toward the work's describable properties. Examples are: 'These single beauties contribute to the transcendent beauty of the whole'. 'This Madelaine repentante is the finest achievement of his spiritual powers, here active at their highest pitch and in perfect harmony'. 'Certainly this is one of his greatest pictures; perhaps his greatest of all: unquestionably a masterpiece'. Such statements provide information about the effect that the work has had upon the writer.

According to the view that I am opposing, the descriptive statements assert nothing about the aesthetic value of the features described, and the value statements provide no information about any observable feature. Consequently, the two kinds of statements are distinguished by reference to the principle of verification. Since the descriptive statements are about observable properties, their truth can be empirically verified. The observations required for testing the correctness of the proposition asserted by 'Georges de la Tour's Madelaine repentante is almost completely monochromatic' are implied by the statement itself and they would provide evidence as conclusive as empirical evidence can ever be. As the value statements are not about any observable property, they imply no empirical test of their correctness. Acquaintance with the facts of the painting would not guarantee the statement 'These single beauties contribute to the transcendent beauty of the whole'.

The diverse functions assigned to critical remarks must be questioned by examining the critical argument from which the six sample statements were borrowed:

In this picture...de la Tour has realized the colour-stealing power of night: it is almost completely monochromatic. The colours used are in the key that is nearest to the blacks and grays and whites of pure tone; they are the "shadowy" tints from darkest umber ("ombre") to ivory, with but the pale gold - untouched by red yet not clear yellow - of the flame. Only on the illumined right shoulder and sleeve there is a tinge of golden pink, and of reddish gold below the right wrist and just touching the breast. Varying tones of old ivory are in the pale tints of Madelaine's face and of her white blouse; palest and most ochreish on the illumined right sleeve and the edge of the left where it has slipped from her bare shoulder; brightest and nearest to white where a gleam of light touches her cheek. Her heavy hair, almost black, falls loose over her shoulders; one narrow slip of light shines through, where it lies along her back.

Darkest umber is the colour of the skull, of the side of the book on which it stands and of the deeply shadowed hand that touches it.

The background, empty night, is little less dark than the solid masses of the objects seen against it; only there is a dull glow of golden-brown in the darkness round the flickering flame.

A gleam touches the yellowish wooden frame of the mirror. All the lower part of the picture is of the darkest tint and almost undetailed, enhancing the effect of mystery: the darkness is broken only by a patch of dim light on the floor, below the just seen edge of the cloth that hangs over the table.

How few and how simple are the formal elements of this most moving picture; how masterly the placing of them together; how simple yet how arrestingly lovely the few details; the delicate transparency of the sleeve faintly revealing the form of the arm within it; the simplified silhouette of the hand dark against the illumined sleeve; its elegant form, slim fingers semi-transparent at the edges, and the half-unconscious sensitive touch of them on the skull: single beauties that contribute to the transcendent beauty of the whole.

... [T]his Madelaine repentante is...the finest achievement of his spiritual powers, here active at their highest pitch and in perfect harmony.

Here are his characteristic mysticism, his subtle psychology, his power of revealing emotion and of evoking emotion both sympathetic and aesthetic; lastly his immaculate chastity of portrayal. Certainly this is one of his greatest pictures; perhaps his greatest of all: unquestionably a masterpiece.<sup>1</sup>

The so-called statements of fact of this argument are, as their definition requires, verifiable by observation. But they appear not to describe a 'physical feature' (empirical property), if such a feature is understood to be distinct (much less separate) from a 'value feature'. For the whole point of the remark in each case is to call attention to the aesthetic value of the feature described. Furness states that the picture "is almost completely monochromatic" in order to support his judgement that "In this picture...de la Tour has realized the colour-stealing power of night," a statement clearly intended to appraise the artistic achievement of a painter of night-pieces. The 'statement of fact', then, is not evaluatively neutral, but is used to show that the painter's artistic aim was realized in the composition. It would certainly be possible to make a purely descriptive (evaluatively neutral) statement about the Madelaine repentante, but such a statement would not form part of a critical appraisal of the work. The statements 'Madelaine repentante is painted on canvas, is 64½ X 52 inches. It dates from circa. 1650, and is now owned by the Louvre' are statements of fact that might appear in an exhibition catalogue. But such statements would be critically irrelevant, and their intention of providing purely factual information quite different from the intention of any of the

statements made by Furness in this critical study of the work.

I do not wish to suggest that philosophers who base their theories upon a logical division of critical remarks into statements of fact and statements of value hold that the statements of fact are critically irrelevant. Far from advocating such an absurdity, they are principally concerned with explaining the way in which these statements can be said to support a critical judgement. What I disagree with throughout this chapter are their explanations, and what I want to show is that the kind of explanation they think it necessary to give would be required only if certain critical remarks were logically identical with the superficially similar remarks of other kinds of discourse. Throughout I am concerned with showing that every statement in a critical argument has some degree of evaluative force, and that a clear-cut logical distinction between statements of fact and statements of value does not therefore apply to critical discourse. For instance, the statement "All the lower part of the picture is of the darkest tint and almost undetailed" might, in certain contexts, be construed as a purely descriptive statement asserted 'to provide the kind of information about a work of art that would be useful for purposes of identification'. But here the point of describing a certain area of the canvas is to reveal its aesthetic value within the composition, as the dependent clause indicates: "enhancing the effect of mystery." Such a statement will appear to be purely fact stating only when considered out of context. Its lack of terms of the kind conventionally considered evaluative does not

argue the statement's logical identity with the statements of empirical discourse. It merely shows that a critic cannot say everything that he wants to say about a work of art at once. Keeping in mind that his intention is to give an account of an object whose every feature has aesthetic value, every statement that he makes about a feature can be understood as saying something about the work's value.

A consideration of the so-called value statements of Furness's argument again shows the distinction to be unsatisfactory. They certainly do express his critical judgement of the parts of the composition, or of the whole painting, that they are about. But they are not about any features that are distinguishable from the features that the so-called descriptive statements are about. The statement (paraphrased) "These single beauties contribute to the transcendent beauty of the whole" refers to the same features that the preceding statements of the paragraph are about, the subject referring to the "formal elements" just listed, the predicate to the whole composition. And the statement does provide information of a certain kind about the features dealt with, of precisely the kind that one would expect from a man writing a critical appraisal of a work of art, namely information about the artistic value of the features. The reliability of this information may be tested, as must the reliability of the information provided by any other statement of the argument, by the observations of other spectators.

Admittedly no amount of empirical observation will serve to



verify the statement "Certainly this is one of his greatest pictures... unquestionably a masterpiece," if by 'empirical observation' is meant simply staring at the pigment adhering to the canvas. One does not expect significant remarks about natural phenomena from a man who gazes idly at some particle of the universe in total ignorance of the laws and methods of natural science. Nor is anyone who is ignorant of the principles of painting in a position to decide upon the correctness of the comparative judgement expressed in Furness's concluding statement. But anyone competent in the subject, who follows this argument by reading each statement as providing observational details about the work, and has in mind the critical analyses made of de la Tour's other canvasses elsewhere in the book, will be in a position to test this statement by his own observation of the painting. Standing alone, the statement does not make clear exactly what observations would be relevant to confirming or denying the judgement. Read in context, the statement involves no such difficulty, for the statements with which it is associated are all about those features which have determined the critic's judgement.

The fact that these statements are not about empirical properties as such (properties observed without regard for their aesthetic value) constitutes no reason for denying them a descriptive function. Since a painting consists of physical features which have aesthetic value within the composition, it can be made the subject of a purely factual description or of a critical description. A chemist's remarks about the chemical



composition of the pigment on the canvas would take the form of pure statements of fact. But a critic is interested in the aesthetic value of the features that he observes, and therefore all the statements of his description have a reference to value. But such statements are nevertheless descriptive in that they provide information about the nature of the work criticized: "How few and how simple are the formal elements of this most moving picture; how masterly the placing of them together; how simple yet how arrestingly lovely the few details..." Such statements are distinguishable from the chemist's statements by their concern with value, and from so-called value statements (which are said to be about non-natural properties or to be the expression of someone's feeling or attitude) in being about a painting's observable features. They are not 'descriptive' in the sense of the term applied to the statements of natural science, for the critic's interest in a painting is of a different kind than that of a scientist, but they nevertheless fulfill a genuinely descriptive function, viz. the function that one would expect a statement about the aesthetic value of a physical feature to fulfill.

It may be argued that if two chemists are in possession of all the relevant facts which a complete analysis can provide, they can only disagree about the chemical composition of the painting if at least one of them makes a logical error in inferring the conclusion from the statements of fact. Two critics, on the other hand, may recognize the same set of facts about a painting's observable features and, without either of

them committing any logical error, reach contrary conclusions about its value. It follows that however rigorous a critic's reasoning may be, statements based upon the observation of a painting do not guarantee a conclusion about its value as statements about its empirical properties guarantee a conclusion about its chemical composition. It must be concluded, therefore, that there is a logical gap between the statements which describe a painting's features and statements which express a critic's judgement of the painting. This argument misses the point that the critics' statements about the work's observable features are not statements of fact as are the statements of the chemists. A painting provides no facts independent of considerations of value for them to observe. All the statements throughout their arguments are concerned with the value of the 'facts' described. And if their observations are the same and are expressed in identical statements, it is impossible (in a sense yet to be defined) that their concluding statements about the work's value should not agree. If such a case of disagreement were ever found, it would also be found that at least one of the critics had concluded his argument with a statement that was inconsistent with his preceding ones. This is a view which requires the support of the entire chapter. I am content if at this point the reader agrees that the analogy between critical discourse and scientific discourse is a false one, depending upon the mistaken assumption that critical statements about a work's observable features are of the same logical character as scientific statements about its empirical

properties. If the reader concedes this much, he may feel some scepticism about the view of the non-valid character of critical argument inferred from this analogy. And I shall try to show by the end of this chapter that his scepticism is well founded.

The interim conclusion is that the distinction between statements of fact and statements of value is seen to be inapplicable to critical discourse when all critical remarks are read in view of the function that they must perform in the context of critical argument. Each critical remark has some evaluative force, or it would have to be considered irrelevant to the critic's purpose of arriving at a judgement of the work's value. And each must also have some descriptive force, or it would have to be considered inconsistent with the critic's intention of making a coherent set of remarks based upon his observations of the work's features. It may be, it probably is, the case that many critical arguments contain irrelevant and inconsistent statements. But a theory of criticism requires some grounds other than the incidental mistakes of critics for its basic logical distinction.

The conclusion reached in the preceding chapter about the descriptive term/value term classification of value predicates applies, as would be expected, to the corresponding distinction between critical remarks as statements of fact and statements of value. A classification of statements based upon this logical dichotomy fails to account for the dual role they must perform in critical discourse, namely to describe and to evaluate

at once. For this reason, the typical critical remark "In this picture...de la Tour has realized the colour-stealing power of night" fits neither the descriptive nor the evaluative class of statements. For it both describes the colour tone of the painting and evaluates the artist's success in achieving one of the things he set out to do. The examination of Furness's criticism of the Madelaine repentante also showed that critical remarks do not behave in the consistent manner required by the conventional manner of classifying statements. Their function is determined by the function of the discourse in which they appear, and therefore if the classification of such a statement as "All the lower part of the picture is of the darkest tint and almost undetailed" is based upon an inspection of the statement out of context, it is as likely to be wrongly classified as not - even if the two classes provided by the traditional view were exhaustive and correctly defined. In the context of a critical argument designed for appraisal every statement has evaluative force in so far as it is consistent with the purpose of the argument of which it forms a part. In some other context the same statement (i.e., a grammatically identical sentence) may qualify as a pure statement of fact; but this consideration is irrelevant to determining the logical character displayed by critical remarks in use.

It seems likely that this misleading distinction between kinds of critical remarks derives from the analogous distinction usually presupposed in ethical inquiries. Most philosophers concerned with the logical problems of evaluative discourse

have worked mainly with reference to ethics, and apparently most of them have assumed that answers to questions about the meaning and function of moral terms and statements and about the relations between statements of moral discourse would serve as answers to analogous questions about critical discourse. The fundamental difference between moral discourse and critical discourse discussed in Chapter I shows their confidence about this to be misplaced. Therefore the claim, implied or stated in many philosophic discussions of value, that critical argument can be understood in terms of the logical structure of moral argument must be rejected. It is perhaps not too much to say that the development of the theory of criticism, in so far as it is concerned with logical problems, has been arrested by the preoccupation with the problems of ethics coupled with the unwarranted assumption that their solution could be adapted with little or no modification to the analogous problems of aesthetics. This tendency has discouraged the scrutiny of criticism as a logically unique form of argument, thoughtlessly admitting notions considered necessary to understanding moral discourse which bring nothing but confusion to theory of criticism. Perhaps the most disastrous of all such notions is the distinction between statements of fact and statements of value.

I am not concerned here with the legitimacy of this distinction in the field of ethics. But I do want to show that even if the distinction is indispensable to an understanding of moral argument, it does not follow that it is also indispensable to an



understanding of critical argument. On the contrary, when the differences between moral discourse and critical discourse are understood, it becomes evident that whatever usefulness the distinction may have for ethics, aesthetics can do better without it.

The distinction between statements of fact and statements of value, so much insisted upon in contemporary discussions of value, is, among other things, a device for exposing the so-called naturalistic fallacy. G. E. Moore and the Intuitionists, for instance, rely upon it in their arguments against the naturalistic tendency to equate the concepts and statements of ethics with those of some other, non-normative subject. Their arguments against theories which depend upon an unacknowledged transition from statement of fact to statement of value are said to be derived from Hume,<sup>2</sup> who was himself, of course, a 'naturalist' in the field of ethics. In the Treatise Hume observes:

I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation which may perhaps be found of some importance. In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with I have always remarked that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but it is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought or ought not expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others that are entirely different from it.<sup>3</sup>

It may very well be correct to say that from a factual



description of what is the case concerning human nature, God, or the universe, or whatever else, no conclusion can be validly deduced about what a man ought to do. If value statements are construed as 'ought' and 'ought not' statements, their deduction from 'is' and 'is not' statements (descriptive statements) appears to be illegitimate. What is to be noticed is that 'ought' and 'ought not' statements, the characteristic concluding statements of moral discourse according to this argument, are by no means typical of critical discourse. Criticism is not primarily concerned with answering practical questions, and therefore it is not susceptible to the alleged fallacy of deducing a concluding statement about the way people ought to act toward a work of art from a set of statements in which there is, admittedly, no 'ought' present.

Clearly, then, critical argument is immune to the naturalistic fallacy in the form in which Hume detected it in moral systems. And there is, therefore, no need to distinguish the statements of critics as statements of fact and statements of value in order to forestall a fallacy which is peculiar to moral discourse.

Once introduced, the distinction persists in discussions of the aesthetic judgement because logicians do not trouble to examine the statements actually asserted in critical discourse. They invent their own examples instead, usually taking some such statement as 'This is beautiful' as the typical critical remark, contrasting it with a typical descriptive remark such as 'This is red'. Considered independently of context, the

two statements of course appear to provide satisfactory examples of the two preconceived logical categories. But when critical arguments are examined, it is found that their statements cannot be classified as the distinction requires without denying them some part of the dual function that they must perform in context.

If the logical dichotomy that I am opposing were warranted, then in a typical piece of critical writing there would be found a conjunction of statements of fact and statements of value. The factual statements would describe the work of art, and the value statements would express the writer's judgement of it. Assuming that criticism is a rational and coherent form of discourse, it must be supposed that all the statements within a single argument have some kind of connection with one another, and usually it is supposed that the descriptive statements are intended to support the value statements. But it is not easy to see how a statement could provide any support for another statement which is of a logically distinct kind. The logician's assignment is to give an account of the connection between the statements of critical argument that will explain the way in which statements of fact support statements of value. His conception of the nature of this logical problem is determined by his supposition that critical remarks are classifiable as either statements of fact or as statements of value. This conception may now be set forth.

In order to understand the logical structure of critical arguments, the relation between statements of fact and statements

of value must be explained. But this relation is inexplicable in terms of any of the accepted rules of inference.

Stated in its most general terms, the philosophers' challenge to the critics takes the form of showing that the descriptive statements and the value statements are not connected in such a way that the latter can be said to be deduced from the former nor that the former can be said to be evidence for the latter. In other words, critical argument does not meet the requirements of either deductive or inductive inference. In pressing the first charge of non sequitur, logicians find it convenient to represent critical argument as syllogistic in form.<sup>4</sup> This is done by representing the critical process in the following way:

- (1) All works of art having properties x, y and z are valuable.
- (2) This work of art has properties x, y and z.
- ∴ (3) This work of art is valuable.

If it is supposed, then, that critical argument is a form of deductive argument, the descriptive statements will be construed as providing the minor premise of a syllogism of which the conclusion is the value statement. The suppressed major premise would have to be a universal proposition to the effect that all works of art having certain stated properties have a certain kind of value. On this view, the criticism of de la Tour discussed above would be re-cast somewhat as follows:

Major Premise (Supplied)	All works of art which are almost completely monochromatic, being dark and almost undetailed in the lower part, with few and simple formal elements, <u>etc.</u> , <u>etc.</u> are valuable, unquestionably masterpieces.
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Minor Premise : This work of art is almost completely mono-  
 (Description) chromatic, dark and almost undetailed in  
 the lower part, with few and simple formal  
 elements, etc., etc.

Conclusion : This work of art is valuable, unquestionably a  
 (Value State- masterpiece.  
 ment)

No one, of course, would expect Furness to commit himself to that universal statement. However, it may be objected that the example is poorly chosen. The features here attributed to all works called valuable are altogether too particular. What is required is the statement of a general criterion such as Mathew Arnold, for instance, proposed for poetry: "that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness."<sup>5</sup> If the substitution of this kind of statement would settle one problem, it would raise another. The major premise must mention such characteristics as can be properly included in the purely descriptive statement that the minor premise is required to be. 'Truth and seriousness in an eminent degree', as Arnold is using the phrase, or as anyone else might use it in relation to poetry, would not serve as the predicate of a purely descriptive statement. Nor can I think of any statement of a general criterion of any form of art that sets forth the approved features in purely descriptive terms. Although the first example appears decidedly odd, I don't see how a more satisfactory one could be provided; and in any case it will serve to illustrate the logical difficulties involved in critical discourse construed as deductive argument.

Whatever may be the content of the generalization which stands as the critic's major premise, he will be asked to explain how he arrived at this universal proposition.

Clearly no such statement can be analytic as is 'All effects have causes', and therefore true by definition. For the particular properties described could become associated with works of art only through the two having been encountered together in experience. Nor can the statement be self-evident, as is 'All coloured things are extended', apprehended, in Aristotle's phrase, by intellectual intuition. It is inconceivable that a thing should be coloured and have no extension. But it is not inconceivable that a work having the properties in question should be a bad work, a failure and not a masterpiece. The presence of other properties could affect the value of the work in a way that no property could affect a thing's having to be extended if it is coloured.

It appears that the critic must have arrived at his major premise through a process of inductive generalization. Having observed that all paintings encountered in the past having the properties specified in the description were valuable paintings, the critic concludes that the universal proposition 'All paintings having properties x, y and z are valuable paintings' must be true. But this universal proposition cannot have been reached through perfect induction, through a complete enumeration of all valuable paintings; the fact that de la Tour's Madelaine repentante, which has just now come up for judgement, had not been observed to have the properties in question until

after the universal statement had been made proves this. Or if it is supposed that the Madelaine repentante was one of the instances examined in formulating the generalization, then it must have been evaluated independently of the generalization, in which case this evaluation requires for its defense some form of argument other than the deductive one here described.

Therefore it must be supposed that the major premise represents an inductive generalization based upon the critic's experience of a restricted number of instances. And the force of the critic's conclusion or judgement is thereby weakened. Granting the accuracy of his observation of the relevant properties, the lack of a necessary connection between the properties and the value associated with them in the major premise deprives his conclusion of certainty. However frequently and consistently the critic finds certain properties and value present together in works of art, he will not see (or intuit) that the former entail the latter. It is this lack of necessary connection which distinguishes the universal proposition in question from others such as 'All effects have causes', in which the predicate is covertly contained in the subject, and 'All coloured things are extended', the recognition of the truth of which follows upon an analysis of the concepts employed. If it is held that the subject and predicate of the second statement are not necessarily but only contingently connected, then the difference between the propositions 'All coloured things are extended' and 'All paintings having properties x, y and z are valuable' can be expressed as a



difference between the degree of likelihood of two possible occurrences. That the creation of a work of art having the specified properties and being nevertheless valueless is a less improbable event than the appearance of an unextended coloured thing will, I think, be conceded. With this concession the discussion moves into the realm of probability, of induction in its commonest form. And now it must be asked how the major premise could be established on purely empirical grounds.

What distinguishes the proposition 'All works of art having properties x, y and z are valuable' from propositions such as 'All men are mortal' is precisely the value judgement implicit in the predicate of the former. The first universal statement expresses a generalization based upon a series of particular statements of the sort 'This work of art having properties x, y and z is valuable'. This statement, in turn, can be analysed into 'This work of art has properties x, y and z' and 'This work is valuable'. The force of the empiricist's argument against value judgements having the same objectivity as genuinely descriptive statements, or the same strong claim to potential truth or correctness, derives from his ability to show that these two statements, 'This work of art has properties x, y and z' and 'This work of art is valuable', are fundamentally different in kind. Their differences preclude their being validly combined in a generalization of the kind required for the deductive argument outlined above. These differences also show that the first kind of statement ('This work of art has

properties x, y and z') does not provide any grounds, guarantee, or evidence for the second kind of statement ('This work of art is valuable'). The argument runs as follows.

The descriptive statements, those asserting that the work has certain properties, can be proved true or false. That is to say, the proposition that a work has certain empirical properties can be verified by anyone who cares to examine the work. But a value statement cannot be verified in this way, for the value term does not describe any observable property. A value statement, then, is not true or false in the same way as is a genuine descriptive statement. One may agree with a critic's description of a work and yet dissent from his judgement of its value without self-contradiction. For a descriptive statement does not entail a value statement.

Nor does the descriptive statement provide evidence for the value statement. For if the presence of certain properties is cited as the reason for the judgement of the work, it is implied that these properties are the cause of the value the work is said to possess. In general, saying that x is the cause of y implies the possibility of establishing the existence of x and y independently of one another. For in order to speak meaningfully of one thing being the cause of another, it must be possible to say what in principle it would be like to find each one of the things separately, even though it is not possible in fact so to find them. In the case of the work of art, it must be possible to distinguish the properties cited as the cause of the work's value from whatever it is that the value

term refers to. But this is, of course, an impossible demand. Although the value statement appears to refer to the work of art, there are no specific value properties to be observed which are distinguishable from the kind of properties mentioned in the descriptive statements. So it is impossible to distinguish the evidence, the observed features, from what, the value, the evidence is supposed to be evidence for. Therefore, the relationship between descriptive statements and value statements cannot be construed as evidential.

It might seem that the logicians have deprived the critics' arguments of the sanctions of inductive and deductive inference and thereby uncovered a logical flaw at the foundations of critical discourse. But this is not so. The logicians have merely revealed a flaw in their conception of critical argument. They suppose that critical arguments are composed of statements of fact and statements of value, but this, as I am trying to show, is not the case. The theoretical distinction is misleading, having no counterpart in critical practice. And the problem raised about a logical gap between the statements of critical argument by analyses which assume the distinction is an artificial problem. And the theories dedicated to solving this problem are consequently otiose.

The writers whose views will be discussed in the next twenty odd pages would see no difficulty in accounting for those critical remarks which they take to be statements of fact. They derive their basic logical conceptions, of the meaningfulness of statements, of verification, of valid inference, from their

analyses of scientific discourse. And any statement of critical discourse which was purely descriptive would be formally like any other descriptive statement; its logical behaviour would not differ in any important way from that of the statements of natural science. And so it could be given the same logical treatment as a statement which occurred in scientific discourse. But what these writers take to be value statements do not occur in scientific discourse, and they cannot be accounted for by a logical theory which is based upon that form of inquiry. But since they do occur (according to these writers), they must be given some kind of elucidation. Certain attempts at clarifying them may now be considered.

On the grounds that a meaningful statement is one which can in principle be shown to be true or false, it has been held that since value statements are not in principle verifiable they are meaningless and do not make genuine assertions at all. They are pseudo-statements, sentences which appear to state something about an object or event but which really merely express the speaker's feelings about it. The rigour of this early positivist argument has been ameliorated by some later analysts who are unwilling to maintain that the only meaningful statements are verifiable ones. C. L. Stevenson, who "finds much more to defend in the analyses of Carnap, Ayer, and the others, than ... to attack,"<sup>6</sup> has questioned the view that all empirically unverifiable statements have no descriptive meaning,<sup>7</sup> and wishes to avoid "any dogmatism about 'the' meaning of ethical judgements"<sup>8</sup> and to temper "the paradoxical contention

that ethical judgements are 'neither true nor false'.<sup>9</sup> (Presumably he would wish to extend these reservations to aesthetic judgements, which are given the same treatment as moral judgements by Carnap and Ayer.) Ten years after the publication of Language, Truth and Logic, Ayer admitted flaws in his argument for verification as a criterion of meaning and, without surrendering "the criterion of verifiability as a methodological principle,"<sup>10</sup> made an important concession in his new introduction to the book: "In putting forward the principle of verification as a criterion of meaning, I do not overlook the fact that the word 'meaning' is commonly used in a variety of senses, and I do not wish to deny that in some of these senses a statement may properly be said to be meaningful even though it is neither analytic nor empirically verifiable."<sup>11</sup> In an article three years later he further qualified his doctrine, conceding that "the view, which I still wish to hold, that what are called ethical statements are not really statements at all, that they are not descriptive of anything, that they cannot be either true or false, is in an obvious sense incorrect";<sup>12</sup> here Ayer explains that he holds to this view, because to do otherwise, to apply the term 'statement' in accordance with common usage, is "logically misleading."<sup>13</sup>

In view of these modifications, it would be unfair to suggest that all philosophical analysts and logical positivists still contend that value statements are meaningless since they entail no observations that could empirically verify them. However, since the earlier writers who did argue this thesis

drew the distinction between statements of fact and statements of value in a strikingly sharp and clear way, their writings provide excellent texts for a discussion of the legitimacy of that distinction.

In Philosophy and Logical Syntax, Rudolph Carnap remarks:

The function of logical analysis is to analyse all knowledge, all assertions of science and everyday life, in order to make clear the sense of each such assertion and the connection between them. One of the principle tasks of the logical analysis of a given proposition is to find out the method of verification for that proposition. The question is: What reasons can there be to assert this proposition; or: How can we become certain as to its truth or falsehood?<sup>14</sup>

Three comments are in order. Here Carnap seems to imply that discovering the method of verifying a proposition will clarify its sense, that is, presumably, its meaning. Moritz Schlick is apparently urging the same view when he writes that "The meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification."<sup>15</sup> Making the meaning of a statement dependent upon the possibility of verification supports the contention that statements which are not verifiable are, in some special sense, meaningless. That Carnap is using the notion of meaningfulness in a restricted sense is indicated by his qualifier "theoretical," as when he says, "What gives theoretical meaning to a proposition is ... the possibility of verification,"<sup>16</sup> and "Thus this statement is not verifiable and has no theoretical sense."<sup>17</sup> A. J. Ayer protects himself in a similar way by the modifiers "literal" and "factual."<sup>18</sup> These qualifiers reflect the fact that when Ayer or Carnap say that certain non-analytic



statements are meaningless they mean that these statements are not meaningful in the same sense as are the statements of empirical propositions. Despite their intentionally limited conception of meaningfulness, their writings carry the constant suggestion, and sometimes the claim, that non-empirical statements not only differ from empirical ones in regard to the way in which their meaning is to be determined, but that they are also devoid of meaning in any sense of that notion whatsoever. But their arguments for verifiability as a criterion of meaning cannot support so general a claim. The criterion, being derived from empirical discourse, is only useful for distinguishing the genuine from the counterfeit amongst statements which purport to be empirical. And even in this realm of discourse, verification is a test for the probable truth of a proposition and not for the meaningfulness of a statement.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it seems impossible that anyone could devise a method for verifying a proposition the meaning of which he did not already understand.

The second point about this paragraph is that Carnap seems to imply that a statement of the method of verification would answer the question, "What reasons can there be to assert this proposition?" But this would not always be the case: a statement of the method for verifying a proposition would not always be equivalent to a statement of the reasons for asserting the proposition. To use one of Carnap's own examples: the statement 'Place this object near a magnet and it will be attracted' asserts a "perceptive proposition" for verifying the statement 'This object is made of iron'. But the observed behaviour of

the object in a magnetic field may not have been the reason for making the statement; the reason may have been that the object was observed to have an atomic weight of 56. The point is important. For Carnap holds that no reasons, in the sense of predictive observational statements, can be given for a value statement. And his position seems to rest partly upon this dubious supposition about the equivalence of reasons and methods of verification. On his view, the only reasons that could be given for asserting a critical judgement, for instance, would be psychological or sociological reasons - empirically verifiable statements about the critic's psychological make-up or about the sociological factors which determine his preference. But such explanations of a critical assertion, made in terms of psychology or sociology, must be distinguished from the aesthetic justification of a critical assertion, made with reference to the work. It is reasons of the second kind that critics customarily provide. It might be thought that these reasons are predictive observational statements, verifiable by any spectator who examines the work. This view seems to me not altogether wrong, but it must be qualified. For aesthetic reasons are not pure statements of fact; their assertion involves a judgement of the value of the fact, and their verification requires not only empirical observation but critical judgement on the part of the spectator. As I have been trying to show, this peculiarity of critical remarks reflects the inseparability of what has been mistakenly analysed into physical features and value features. Keeping in mind

the nature of the things about which critical remarks are made, one sees that there is no problem about these remarks to be solved by a theory which deals exclusively in empirical statements and value statements. Some critical remarks seem to me to provide reasons in a quite acceptable sense, although they do not satisfy Carnap's requirement of being pure empirical propositions. Nevertheless, they are all about the work judged, as the statement of atomic weight is about the piece of iron, and they must be defended by reference to the work and not by reference to the peculiarities of the critic's temperament or background.

The third point is raised by Carnap's final question: "How can we become certain as to its truth or falsehood?" and the suggestion that when a method of verification is found certainty about the truth or falsehood of a proposition is attainable. However often independent spectators examine a work of art and confirm a critic's judgement of it, it cannot be said that they have "become certain" of the correctness of the judgement - unless, of course, 'certainty' is understood in the sense of 'conviction'. If 'certainty' is understood in this sense, then there is as much certainty about the Eroica's being great music as about the facts stated by most empirical propositions. If it is not used in this sense, but in an objective sense, still critical statements and empirical statements are in the same case in this respect: the reasons given for them do not constitute any certain guarantee of their correctness nor does the agreement of independent observers. Disagreements amongst

critics do not in themselves provide any reason for supposing that their judgements are any less well founded than those of empirical scientists. In neither field is the method employed designed to provide certainty about the conclusions.

For Carnap meaningful discourse is coextensive with natural science,<sup>20</sup> and therefore the statements of natural science provide the model of meaningful statements:

Every assertion P in the wide field of science has this character, that it either asserts something about present perceptions or other experiences, and therefore is verifiable by them, or that propositions about future perceptions are deducible from P together with some already verified propositions.<sup>21</sup>

It is this "character" of an assertion that determines whether or not it has meaning:

What gives theoretical meaning to a proposition is not the attendant images and thoughts but the possibility of deducing from it perceptive propositions, in other words, the possibility of verification.<sup>22</sup>

Speaking of an assertion from which no "perceptive proposition" could be deduced, Carnap says, "In that case our reply is: your assertion is no assertion at all; it does not speak about anything; it is nothing but a series of empty words; it is simply without sense."<sup>23</sup> It is, in short, what Carnap calls a "metaphysical"<sup>24</sup> proposition, a proposition which is non-verifiable, because it entails no statement of what will be observed if the proposition is true. There is no way to determine (empirically) whether it is true or false; and if a meaningful assertion is one that is either true or false, metaphysical assertions must be rejected as meaningless. Carnap

construes all value statements as metaphysical assertions and therefore as devoid of theoretical sense.

Carnap claims that his logical analysis of the moral judgement "Killing is evil"<sup>25</sup> applies to all value statements. His conclusion, "Thus this statement is not verifiable and has no theoretical sense,"<sup>26</sup> is also supposed to apply to all value statements. His analysis,<sup>27</sup> however, depends upon construing every value statement as a "command in a misleading grammatical form."<sup>28</sup> However plausible this interpretation of moral statements may be, it makes nonsense of critical statements, as I tried to show earlier.

Despite the generality claimed for his conclusions regarding value statements, Carnap's analysis is confined to moral statements. Had he attempted to apply it to critical statements, he would, I think, have seen the need to modify his theory. He would have found countless critical statements that would be made unintelligible if read as commands in a misleading grammatical form. And he would have found countless critical statements that were neither statements of fact nor statements of value but a third kind of statement, combining a descriptive and an evaluative function, which eludes an analysis that operates with a two-class system of statements. But there is no evidence in Carnap's work of his having considered that there might be important logical differences between the statements of moral discourse and the statements of critical discourse. Nor is there any evidence of his having examined critical discourse to see whether or not its statements belong to either one or



the other of the two types of statements which he distinguishes. He assumes that findings based upon an analysis of moral statements serve to explain the logical character of critical statements, and he also assumes that all these statements will fit into either one or the other of the two classes that he has provided. His conclusion must be appraised in view of these assumptions, both of which, in my opinion, are wrong.

Distinguishing between assertion and expression, Carnap concludes that all metaphysical statements, which include all value statements, assert nothing, although they may have an expressive function. "Metaphysical propositions are neither true nor false, because they assert nothing, they contain neither knowledge nor error, they lie completely outside the field of knowledge, of theory, outside the discussion of truth or falsehood."<sup>29</sup> But they are, like laughing, lyrics, and music, expressive. With this conclusion the groundwork is laid for the development of the emotive and attitude theories soon to be considered.

But first an alternative solution proposed by G. E. Moore and certain intuitionists may be reviewed briefly. They attempt to bridge the alleged gap by arguing that no gap exists; their argument depends upon showing that value statements are, in a sense, descriptive statements. These statements, unlike the statements of natural science, do not denote empirical properties; rather they denote non-natural features. But this expedient does not remove the difficulty created by distinguishing critical remarks as statements of fact and statements of



value. For whether it is said that some of the statements of a critical argument are descriptive and some are not or that some of the statements describe empirical properties and some non-natural properties, in either case criticism is left with two sets of statements of fundamentally different kinds. There is no reason to suppose that if all of a critic's statements of one kind, say those about a work's empirical properties, were accepted, that it follows that all of his statements of the other kind, those about the work's non-natural features, would be accepted in consequence. However one assesses the contribution of these theories toward solving problems of ethics, they leave the problem of aesthetics (in the form in which they have raised it) standing.

Their problem and their failure to solve it are attributable to the same mistake. Their problem is created by the assumption that critical discourse is composed of two logically distinct kinds of statement. They do not question this assumption nor examine criticism to see whether or not the assumption is well founded, whether or not it is correct to speak of any critical remark as simply describing an empirical property. All the old trouble-making notions are preserved in their theory and a new one about non-natural characteristics is introduced.

Distinguishing between natural characteristics and non-natural characteristics is another way of expressing the physical feature/aesthetic feature dichotomy. I am not suggesting that it was formulated for this purpose; it was, I believe,

first introduced by G. E. Moore in Principia Ethica<sup>30</sup>, and it has since re-appeared most often in discussions of ethics. But Moore himself and C. D. Broad<sup>31</sup> also give the impression that if the notion of a non-natural characteristic is a useful notion at all, it will be as useful for explaining what the value predicates of aesthetic judgements stand for as for explaining what the value predicates of moral judgements stand for. Although an ethical inquiry was the occasion for introducing the distinction between natural and non-natural characteristics, it is nevertheless the case that this distinction, when applied to works of art, is interchangeable with the distinction between a work's physical features and its value features. The arguments of Chapter 2, therefore, can be taken as applying here.

An analysis of value statements based upon an emotive theory appears to dispose of Moore's non-natural quality by showing that value predicates are not the names of any characteristics of the things denoted by the subject term. Value predicates provide no information about the subject but serve to express or to arouse emotion or to issue commands. If the emotive theory were correct and applicable to criticism, it would follow that whenever a critic passed judgement upon a work it would have to be supposed that he was feeling a certain emotion about it. But it seems at least possible that a critic might make a remark about a work's value when he felt no particular emotion about the work at all. But the emotive theory is not disposed toward recognizing any exception to its

generalization. Having equated the evaluative function of a critical remark with the expression of emotion, every instance of a critical remark being asserted is interpreted as an instance of an emotion felt. However calm and detached a critic's remarks may appear, his use of a term of evaluative force is taken as an indubitable sign that he has undergone an emotional experience of some kind. The fact that critical statements make clear the writer's opinion of the work's value but often leave his emotion a matter of conjecture does not discourage these theorists. According to them, critical remarks assert not verdicts or opinions or judgements or appraisals but emotions. The fact that critical literature abounds in such dispassionate assertions as "The movement, for Tchaikovsky, is one of unprecedented richness of ideas, development and orchestration."<sup>32</sup> is unaccounted for by this theory.

If the emotive theory is accepted, it must also be supposed that the effectiveness of critical writing depends upon the reader having a certain feeling when he hears such words as 'good', 'beautiful', etc. applied to works of art. What reason is there for rejecting the most obvious construction that can be put upon a critical remark, that it is asserted in order to inform the reader of the critic's judgement of a work's value, in favour of the view that it is intended to arouse the reader's emotions? The reason must be that it is supposed that it is only by exciting his reader's emotions that a critic can communicate his judgement and win acceptance for it. But this is not the case; for one can understand critical remarks

without having the emotions stirred by them, and even agree with them without having any special feeling toward the work evoked. The view that agreement in judgements of value must depend upon a similarity between emotional experiences is without evidence to support it. Is it impossible for two or more people whose emotional experiences on a certain occasion differ to assent to the proposition 'That is good'? I don't see how the defense of an affirmative answer to this question could avoid a petitio principii, namely that their assenting to the same judgement argues agreement amongst their emotional experiences. What reason is there for holding that agreement on judgements of value depends upon a coincidence of emotional experiences? The reason is that emotions are expressed and aroused by assertions of value judgements. But this is just what the theorists in question are required to show.

The emotive theory of value fails to account for the logic of critical statements because it is grounded upon the errors and over-sights that I have been trying to expose throughout this thesis. It ignores the possibility of there being important differences between moral discourse and critical discourse, assuming that an explanation of moral statements will take account of critical statements. It does not examine actual instances of either kind of discourse, but treats hypothetical assertions of its own invention, overlooking the importance of context in determining the logical character of the statements made in argument. It works with the two class system of statements, never questioning the legitimacy of the distinction

between statements of fact and statements of value. Even when the dual nature of the statements used in argument about value is recognized, these statements are subjected to an analysis which yields a factual and an evaluative component.<sup>33</sup> Thus transformed, critical remarks can be treated in part as the statements of empirical science are treated, and what is left over can be given a psychological explanation. What is explained by this kind of analysis is not a critical remark as it functions in argument but a hypothetical statement which has been mutilated by the logician's arbitrary translation. All of these deficiencies are evident in the work of A. J. Ayer.

The emotive theory of value presented in Language, Truth and Logic is explicable with reference to the verificationist principle expounded by Ayer in that same book. The principle of verification is supposed to provide a criterion for determining whether or not a statement is literally meaningful.<sup>34</sup> Every non-analytic statement requires "that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood."<sup>35</sup> Any statement which fails to satisfy this requirement is held by Ayer, as by Carnap, to be "metaphysical,"<sup>36</sup> and "being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless."<sup>37</sup> It might be supposed that sense-experience was indeed relevant to determining the truth or falsehood of statements made about the value of works of art. But Ayer denies this, maintaining "that in so far as statements of value are significant, they are ordinary 'scientific' statements; and that in so far as they are not scientific,

they are not in the literal sense significant, but are simply expressions of emotion which can be neither true nor false."<sup>38</sup>

Ayer's analysis is restricted to ethical statements. However, he believes that "What is said about them will be found to apply, mutatis mutandis, to the case of aesthetic statements also."<sup>39</sup> Just how his comments about moral statements could be applied to critical statements remains obscure. He considers the statement 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money' in order to show that the normative term adds no information about the action that would not be provided by the pure statement of fact 'You stole that money'.<sup>40</sup> The normative term serves merely to express the speaker's feelings about the action. Whether or not this interpretation of ethical statements is acceptable, it clearly misrepresents critical statements. How could one break up such a statement as this one by James Soby about John Marin's painting into a factual element and an emotive (normative) element: "As early as 1910, in water colors of the Tyrol, he had attained that remarkable control of translucence which remained one of his most distinguished characteristics"?<sup>41</sup> It cannot, of course, be done; for the phrase "remarkable control of translucence," which is certainly normative, is also informative. If it were omitted, Marin's water colours would be less adequately described: one would be told less about the features of this painter's work; and this, rather than being told less about Soby's feelings, would constitute the important reduction in meaning. If Ayer had troubled to examine critical writing, he would not have



maintained that "A valuation is not a description...at all,"<sup>42</sup> nor that it is equivalent to a statement of fact asserted "in a peculiar tone of horror, or written...with the addition of some special exclamation marks."<sup>43</sup>

According to Ayer, discourse about value is composed of two kinds of assertion. There are genuine statements asserting empirical propositions; these are meaningful statements of fact, verifiable as are any other empirical statements. There are also statements of value, pseudo-statements which sometimes appear to make assertions but which really serve to express the speaker's feelings. They are not verifiable because they assert no fact. Their function is to arouse feeling in the hearer or to exhort him to action through carrying the effect of a command. Argument about questions of value is therefore reducible to argument about questions of fact; since only statements which express genuine propositions can be in contradiction, it is only on points of fact that there can be genuine disagreement. If agreement about value does not follow upon agreement about the relevant facts, only persuasion by rhetoric can settle the dispute. Thus the function of value statements is to be understood in terms of their emotive power: "It is...possible to influence other people by a suitable choice of emotive language; and this is the practical justification for the use of normative expressions of value."<sup>44</sup>

Ayer's conception of the problem of discourse about value is determined by his acceptance of the principle of verification as a criterion of meaning. Transposing this principle

derived from a logical analysis of empirical science to critical discourse, critical argument is made to yield two classes of statements: genuine or factual statements and pseudo- or value statements. The problem of the connection between the statements of critical argument is taken to be insoluble in logical terms because some of the statements are meaningless. These statements are explained in terms of their emotive potency and a psychological account is given of their function in argument. But the problem as Ayer conceives of it is an artificial problem. For critical remarks do not fall into these two logically distinct classes: those which state facts about works of art and those which express critics' feelings. Having thus misconstrued critical statements, his conception of critical argument could not fail to misrepresent the problem of its logical structure. There is, therefore, no reason to accept his emotive theory of values as a solution.

As we have already said, our conclusions about the nature of ethics apply to aesthetics also. Aesthetic terms are used in exactly the same way as ethical terms. Such aesthetic words as "beautiful" and "hideous" are employed, as ethical words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response. It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgements, and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics, but only about questions of fact. A scientific treatment of aesthetics would show us what in general were the causes of aesthetic feeling, why various societies produced and admired the works of art they did, why taste varies as it does within a given society, and so forth. And these are ordinary psychological or sociological questions. They have, of course, little or nothing to do with aesthetic criticism as we understand it. But that is because the purpose of aesthetic criticism is not so much to give knowledge as to communicate

emotion. The critic, by calling attention to certain features of the work under review, and expressing his own feelings about them, endeavours to make us share his attitude towards the work as a whole. The only relevant propositions that he formulates are propositions describing the nature of the work. And these are plain records of fact.<sup>45</sup>

This paragraph exemplifies nearly all of the defects of theory which I have been trying to expose throughout this thesis. The greater part of my argument can be summarized by a line by line analysis of this passage.

"As we have already said, our conclusions about the nature of ethics apply to aesthetics also." The grounds of this assertion are left unexamined. No statements of aesthetic judgements, not even hypothetical ones, are considered. The claim that his analysis of moral statements accounts for critical statements as well is left undefended.

"Aesthetic terms are used in exactly the same way as ethical terms." This assertion is not supported by an examination of how aesthetic terms function in the context of critical argument.

"Such aesthetic words as 'beautiful' and 'hideous' are employed, as ethical words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response." It is true that aesthetic terms are not used to make statements of fact; but the most likely alternative view of their function is not that they are used emotively. On the contrary, they are used to make assertions about the value of things, and such assertion does not necessarily presuppose "certain feelings" on the part of the speaker nor need it elicit an emotional response from the hearer. At

least Ayer's counter-claim is not self-evident; nor does an inspection of critical statements consistently reveal evidence of emotion felt by the speaker; nor do many critical statements appear any better suited to excite emotion than do the statements of empirical science.

"It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgements, and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics, but only about questions of fact." Since the above premise misconstrues the function of aesthetic terms, this conclusion drawn from it must also be rejected. The distinction made here between questions of fact and questions of value is an abstraction which has no counterpart in critical discourse where questions of fact and questions of value are inseparable. Since there is no legitimate distinction to be drawn between a work of art's physical features and its value features, nor between descriptive terms and value terms, it is misleading to distinguish between questions of fact and questions of value in regard to criticism. From the point of view of criticism, there are no statements of fact to be made about a work which are independent of considerations of value; and there are no statements of value which do not refer to facts, i.e., to observable features. All aspects of the fact/value dichotomy are accepted by Ayer without question. Neither works of art nor the terms and statements used about them are examined in order to see whether the distinction has any basis in actuality.

"A scientific treatment of aesthetics would show us what

in general were the causes of aesthetic feeling, why various societies produced and admired the works of art they did, why taste varies as it does within a given society, and so forth. And these are ordinary psychological and sociological questions." These remarks point to the need of distinguishing between genetic and normative inquiries.<sup>46</sup> A genetic inquiry into a critical response attempts to explain that response on psychological grounds. The critic's enjoyment or approval is taken as a fact to be explained, and the explanation takes the form of a causal argument. A normative inquiry gives reasons for the critic's judgement by reference to the work itself. The first kind of inquiry is concerned with explanation, the second with justification. Ayer is aware of this distinction; but having equated meaningful discourse with empirical discourse, he must classify all critical remarks as being either statements of fact or pseudo-statements. A critical judgement can be explained, for an explanation would be composed of genuine statements; but a critical judgement cannot be justified, for arguments about value contain statements which are literally meaningless. Since Ayer means by 'literally meaningless' only 'non-empirical', his argument against the possibility of justifying critical judgements need not be taken seriously; for critical discourse does not pretend to be empirical discourse, and its statements are not subject to the same test of meaningfulness.

"They [psychological and sociological questions] have, of course, little or nothing to do with aesthetic criticism as we



understand it. But that is because the purpose of aesthetic criticism is not so much to give knowledge as to communicate emotion." The assignment of this purpose to aesthetic criticism is attributable to the discovery that critical statements differ logically from the statements of empirical science. The discovery is important, but the inference made from it about the status of critical statements has little to recommend it except its efficacy as a way of putting an end to inquiries into the logical connections between such statements. Since critical statements are certainly intended to express judgments of value, not emotions, Ayer's conception of their purpose should be accepted only if a closer inspection of them than he has attempted reveals that they are incapable of fulfilling their ostensible purpose.

"The critic, by calling attention to certain features of the work under review, and expressing his own feelings about them, endeavours to make us share his attitude towards the work as a whole." As a description of critical procedure, this statement contains a grain of truth. It would be rendered fairly accurate by substituting 'judgement' for 'feeling' and for 'attitude'.

"The only relevant propositions that he formulates are propositions describing the nature of the work. And these are plain records of fact." Critical descriptions differ from the descriptions of empirical science because of their concern with the value of the things described. Plain statements of fact about works of art would be critically irrelevant, and they do



not appear in the context of discourse about the value of works of art. If all critical statements except those asserting "plain records of fact" were rejected as irrelevant, Ayer would be left with little to explain.

Some revision of this argument against prescriptive theories is required in order to do justice to Charles L. Stevenson's Ethics and Language and "Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics."<sup>47</sup> Stevenson's views on evaluative argument were initially derived from an analysis of moral discourse; the general conception of discourse about value developed in Ethics and Language had clear implications for theory of criticism, and these were partially worked out in the subsequent article.

A detailed exposition of the extended and complicated analysis of Ethics and Language would involve a lengthy digression from the main course of my argument. However, since Stevenson's general theory of evaluation is given more adequate expression in the ethical work, and since his discussion of aesthetic evaluation is made to depend heavily upon the earlier study, it would be neither fair nor prudent to ignore it. All that I wish to show here is that despite important differences between Stevenson's views and method and those of the writers just considered there are grounds for suspicion that a theory of criticism derived from the analysis of Ethics and Language would result in a misconception of critical argument very similar to the one that I have been describing. This is a suspicion that we shall find confirmed upon turning to his study of critical argument. Transposing an ethical analysis

into terms of theory of criticism involves a risk of misrepresenting even an author who stresses the similarity between the two types of discourse. Stevenson's explicit study in aesthetics can, however, serve as a guide. Therefore, I shall paraphrase his ethical theory as if he had originally cast it in terms of aesthetics.

The twin concepts with which Stevenson works throughout his book are reasons (beliefs) and attitudes. Statements of aesthetic judgements are apparently to be understood as statements which assert the speaker's attitude toward a thing or event and which have, at least potentially, the effect of inculcating in some other person the same attitude toward the thing or event. Reasons are statements of the facts which have determined the speaker's attitude and which if accepted as true and relevant by other persons will tend to induce agreement between their attitudes and his. The distinction between descriptive statements and value statements is preserved here in a disguised and mitigated form. Statements of the reasons for a judgement are essentially descriptive statements, although they may contain terms of evaluative force. Statements of a judgement are construed as being essentially emotive, although they may contain terms of descriptive power. The explicit recognition of the duality of at least some of the statements used in evaluative discourse represents, according to my own view, an important advance upon the other theories so far considered. But by misnaming the evaluative element of such statements, Stevenson perpetuates the misleading suggestions of the earlier writers.

Throughout he uses 'emotive' synonymously with 'evaluative', or rather in key places he replaces 'evaluative' with 'emotive'. (In the article, lack of space prevents him from discussing the emotive aspects of critical terms, and he refers the reader to Ethics and Language<sup>48</sup>.) It appears to follow from this that a critical statement could be analysed into a descriptive component and an emotive component. But this way of characterizing critical statements seems either to deprive them of all evaluative force or to identify the evaluative force with the statements' emotive force; and undoubtedly it is the second contention that is intended. But it seems to me that the only reason for this identification of evaluative force and emotive force is that it facilitates a psychological explanation of the relation between the statements of critical argument. This reason is acceptable enough, pragmatically, to anyone who wants a psychological explanation of how one man can affect the attitude of another by rhetorical means. But such an explanation is an alternative to an account of the logical structure of critical argument.<sup>49</sup>

This line of inquiry may provide very interesting information about how a critic manages to persuade other people to prefer the things he does. But it cannot explain the logical structure of critical argument, for the possibility of there being a logical connection between the statements of critical argument is rejected at the outset. And this possibility is rejected because the view that some of the statements of such an argument assert facts about a work of art and other

statements assert a judgement of its value (i.e. express an attitude) sets the problem even for this study which repeatedly casts doubt on the legitimacy of the distinction.

In "Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics," the essence of which can be stated in a paragraph, Stevenson attempts to answer the question, "What can a critic reasonably be understood to mean, then, when he predicates this or that aesthetic term of a work of art - when he says (to take new examples) that it is 'satirical' or that it 'expresses nostalgia' or that 'its perpendicular planes set up an internal tension' or that 'in spite of its artistic imperfections, it achieves sublimity'?"<sup>50</sup> His answer is that any such statement "has the same meaning as 'The work of art appears  $Q_s$  [to have the appropriate quality] when observed in the proper way'."<sup>51</sup> Stevenson supposes that what is required now is a definition of 'proper' as it is used in the formula "'This work of art is  $Q_o$  [actually allegorical, unified, beautiful, or whatever else]'" has the same meaning as 'This work of art appears  $Q_s$  [allegorical, unified, beautiful, or whatever else] when observed in the proper way'."<sup>52</sup> He argues that 'proper' is not a purely scientific term, but rather a normative one, and therefore, in his view, a term with imperative force. To assert a critical judgement is in effect to command the reader to observe the work of art in a certain way, for example, to read some poem as an allegory, and thereby experience it as having a certain quality. Scientific reasons can be offered to encourage the reader to obey; it might be urged, for example, that an alternative approach to

the poem involves an anachronism. But such reasons are not logically related to the critical judgement (command); they are causally, psychologically, related to it, functioning to determine the critic's decision and to influence that of his readers.<sup>53</sup>

There are a number of objections to this argument; three of them will serve to refute it. There are no grounds for interpreting a critical statement such as 'This poem is allegorical' to mean 'This poem appears allegorical when observed in the proper way' that would not warrant interpreting an empirical statement such as 'This penny is brown' to mean 'This penny appears brown when observed in the proper way'. Stevenson would say that in the latter case the 'proper way' can be specified with scientific exactness, whereas in the former case it cannot.<sup>54</sup> This contention is not only dubious but beside the point. The point is that on Stevenson's line of reasoning any and every empirical statement could be construed as an imperative. Therefore he has failed to distinguish critical statements from empirical ones, which is what he intended to do by 'proving' critical statements to be imperatives.

In any case the proof fails. Stevenson set out to elucidate the meaning of critical statements with predicates such as 'allegorical', 'unified', and 'beautiful'.<sup>55</sup> What he has shown is that some other kind of statement (which might contain the word 'proper') about how to confirm a critical remark may have imperative force. This is interesting but beside the original point.



If a critic were asked what he meant by saying 'This poem is an allegory', he might begin by defining 'allegory'. When it was established that the meaning of this word was understood, presumably he would then give his reasons for saying that the poem in question was allegorical. These reasons would be expressed in the form of statements about the poem's features, and they would be calculated to show that the poem had the defining characteristics of an allegory. In other words, these statements would be intended to provide evidence for the judgement, and they would have to be logically related to the statement 'This poem is an allegory' if they were to fulfill this intention. To say that 'This poem is an allegory' means the same as 'This poem appears to be an allegory when read in the proper way', and that this translation means the same as 'This poem appears to be an allegory when read as an allegory', and that this version is equivalent to 'Go and read it as an allegory' does not really go very far toward explaining what a critic means "when he predicates this or that aesthetic term of a work of art."<sup>56</sup> Thus a patient consideration of Stevenson's analysis discloses no reason for revoking the objections of Chapter I against the implausible view that a critical remark asserting a work of art to be poignant or unified or beautiful is, despite appearances to the contrary, in reality an imperative in disguise.

Stevenson's difficulties follow from his having inherited the heterogenous view of critical argument; the conventional distinction between statements of fact and statements of value



reappears in his work in various guises, as a distinction between statements of reasons and statements of attitudes,<sup>57</sup> between primary and secondary reasons,<sup>58</sup> between interpretative and evaluative statements,<sup>59</sup> and between primary reasons and imperatives.<sup>60</sup> Although Stevenson recognizes that in practice critical remarks are not thus clearly differentiated, he thinks that in order to understand them it is necessary to reduce them to the two basic types acknowledged by convention. But this reduction creates a problem by cutting the critic's remarks off from one another and destroying the logical links which connect them in actual argument. However much one may admire the theory advanced by Stevenson to solve this problem, it must not be forgotten that the problem itself does not inhere in critical argument but in that false conception of it which is based upon the two class system of critical statements. Stevenson understands that critical judgements are not characteristically supported by sets of exclusively factual statements. Criticism differs from empirical science, and therefore, Stevenson concludes, its judgements cannot really be informative, as empirical propositions are; they must be imperatives, as, Stevenson holds, ethical judgements are, and the reasons adduced to support them must be related to them "causally rather than logically."<sup>61</sup> Although critics are not scientists, if their judgements are to be even partially rational prescriptions, they must be 'guided by' a "carefully organized body of empirically verified primary reasons."<sup>62</sup> Thus statements of critical judgements depend ultimately upon factual statements which,

being of a different type, cannot be logically connected with them. By preserving the fiction of a purely factual component in critical argument, Stevenson loses sight of the point that the statements which give reasons for a judgement also express value judgements, not empirical descriptions of facts but critical judgements of the aesthetic value of facts. Having forfeited the chance of showing that critical reasons and judgements are logically related he must content himself with showing how the former may be psychologically efficacious in getting the recommendations implicit in the latter adopted. The exigencies of this programme require him to characterize critical statements as serving to issue commands and not, as an inspection of the remarks actually asserted by critics shows to be the case, to provide critical information about the aesthetic value of works of art.

The congruity of description and judgement is the key to the logical structure of critical argument. A critic's description of a work of art and his terminal judgement of its value are normally compatible because his description involves evaluation. In giving a description of a work of art, the critic is preoccupied with the aesthetic value of what he describes. He does not merely record his empirical observations but gives an account of the work's features in terms of their aesthetic value.<sup>63</sup> There is, therefore, no leap from factual statements (of reasons or beliefs) to value statements (emotive expressions of attitude) requiring a psychological theory to connect them. A coherent piece of critical writing is unified

by the critic's persistent concern with the aesthetic value of what he observes. His judgement of a work of art is inferable from his description of it, because his selection of terms for describing the work is determined by considerations of value. There is no leap from statements recording a critic's empirical observations to statements expressing his judgement; for critical statements are not empirical statements: they incorporate an evaluative element. The pattern of critical argument shows transitions from statements of high descriptive power to statements of high evaluative power. These transitions are explicable in the light of the coherence imposed by the critic's exclusive concern with the aesthetic value of a work's observable features. This concern is satisfied by the circumstance that from the point of view of criticism the features of a work of art are not divisible into physical features and value features; all are simply critically relevant features concerning which there is no distinction to be made between what is observed and what is evaluated.

If critical statements are taken as constituting a graduated scale progressing from statements of high descriptive power and low evaluative power to statements of low descriptive power and high evaluative power, it is seen that there is no logical gap between them in the context of a single argument. The notion of critical argument as consisting of two logically distinct kinds of statements does leave a gap and therefore room for a theory such as Stevenson's which bridges the gap by external, psychological means. But this kind of connection and this

kind of theory are required only because critical remarks have been misconstrued through ignoring either the dual role that they all perform in argument or the implications of this for a logical theory of critical discourse. When the descriptive/evaluative distinction between critical statements is posited, a gap between them appears and an emotive view of 'value' statements suggests itself as an expedient for repairing the breach. Even when the duality of actual critical statements is recognized, as by Stevenson, the abstract logical distinction exerts its influence, raising an artificial problem about the connection between the statements of critical discourse.

An accurate conception of critical statements is prerequisite to an investigation of the logical structure of critical argument. The defective two-class system must therefore be replaced by a conception of critical statements based upon the theory of predicates presented in the preceding chapter. According to this view, neither the descriptive power ~~not~~ the evaluative power of all the critical statements within a single argument is equal, but neither are any of the statements, in so far as they are consistent with the purpose of the argument, completely devoid of either descriptive or evaluative force. Each critical statement must be construed as belonging somewhere on a continuous range of statements which progresses from statements which are primarily but not exclusively descriptive to statements which are primarily but not exclusively evaluative. So construed, no critical remark will be classified as belonging to a kind which is logically distinct from

any other statement with which it is associated in critical discourse. This conception of critical statements supplied the groundwork for the preceding examination of certain theories of value, and it will also provide the basis of the proposals that I have to make about the logical structure of critical argument in the next chapter. This view of critical statements can now be supported by reference to a typical piece of critical writing.

Tracing the development of de la Tour's use of chiaroscuro, S. M. M. Furness shows how in L'Extase d'un moine a technical problem involved in painting night scenes is resolved. The description of the feature in question, the illumination, not only provides information about the painting that can be confirmed by observation but also tells why the lighting is disposed as it is in this composition:

The source of light, a candle, is partly hidden by a small iron screen, or reflector, fixed to the stage at such an angle that the light is partly shut off from the face and figure of the unconscious monk, whose contorted position further produces shadows that interrupt and break up the illumination. The face and raised hands of the other and the book lying open on his knees are fully illumined.

This disposition of the light has two effects; it contributes to the uniquely dramatic expressiveness of the whole picture, and particularly of the fallen figure; and it marks symbolically the contrasted physical and spiritual states of the two Brothers - the perturbation of ecstasy in the one, the mingled awe and thankfulness in the other who, unsharing, witnesses it.

In a word, the effect of the chiaroscuro, almost superseding colour, in this picture, is expressly psychological, and is in harmony with the mystical import of the subject. It belongs, without doubt, to a very advanced stage in de la Tour's use of light and of darkness as primary elements or materials of his design.<sup>64</sup>



Clearly, the lighting in this picture is at once a fact and a value, an observable, describable physical feature presented as the solution to an artistic problem. By treating the feature in terms of its aesthetic value, Furness discovers the nature of this problem and is therefore able to understand (appreciate) de la Tour's solution. In relation to this feature, his description not only tells what is in the painting but also why it is there; since the reasons he offers are from an aesthetic point of view satisfactory, his remarks imply a favourable critical judgement, at least in regard to the lighting of the picture.

What appears to be the main difficulty about critical argument is that it cannot be decided by observation whether certain statements rightly characterize the work of art about which they are asserted. It must be admitted that statements of high evaluative power do not usually, in themselves, clearly imply the observations relevant to determining their correctness. In itself, the statement "In a word, the effect of the chiaroscuro, almost superseding colour, in this picture, is expressly psychological, and is in harmony with the mystical import of the subject" leaves some doubt as to the observations that might confirm the judgement it asserts. But this difficulty is not insuperable, nor is it peculiar to critical discourse. It can be shown that when any critical statement is understood in relation to the other statements which support it, the context will make plain what observations are required in order to test the statement. In the present case, the



claim that de la Tour's use of chiaroscuro is "in harmony with the mystical import of the subject" must be understood in the light of the interpretation of the artist's subject given in the second paragraph, and it must be tested by the specific observations indicated by the statements of high descriptive power given in the first. This mutual dependence of statements is characteristic of scientific discourse also; not all of the statements of natural science are observational statements by any means. Many of them are meaningful only in relation to the other statements with which they are associated in exposition; and many of them are not directly verifiable, but rely upon other statements which are amenable to empirical tests.

The attempt to describe critical argument as resting upon a sound and respectable intellectual basis should not be discouraged because the observations relevant to supporting its judgements are not pure empirical observations. The assertion of critical statements presupposes critical judgement, and critical judgement requires a technical knowledge of the art with which the critic professes to deal. Technical competence is also required in natural science, where simple perception, however accurate, unaided by theory and uncontrolled by hypotheses would yield few informative remarks. That critics are concerned with a particular aspect of the things that they write about, namely with aesthetic value, raises no barrier against discriminating between cogent critical argument and the reverse. It is only if one supposes that observation from the point of view which is appropriate for verifying empirical

propositions is the only legitimate kind that critical statements will be regarded as recalcitrant to the test of observation. Since critics do not describe physical properties as such, do not report facts, no one should despair because their statements cannot be subjected to the same kind of test as can statements which do. To make the observations necessary to deciding upon the correctness of a critical judgement requires critical judgement. But this is only to say that a certain kind of expertness is required for an intelligent reading of critical literature. Different kinds of expertness are essential for understanding other kinds of discourse. The important differences between critical discourse and other kinds provide no reason for saying that critical assertion is based exclusively upon taste or caprice or emotion or any other subjective factor not present in the formulation of other kinds of propositions. Such a conclusion results from the attempt to submit critical remarks to inappropriate tests and the quite arbitrary claim that only the tests of correctness employed in pure and empirical science can distinguish true assertion from false and valid inference from invalid.

All critical statements characterize a work of art's observable features from the point of view of aesthetic value. They are distinguished from empirical statements in that the kind of information they provide is not factual but rather information about the aesthetic value of things. They are distinguished from rhetoric and imperatives and expressions of emotion in that they claim to make defensible assertions about objects.

And they are distinguished from statements about imperceptible non-natural features in that they are about the observable features of works of art.<sup>65</sup> The observations upon which critical statements are grounded involve aesthetic judgement (just as diagnostic statements based upon observation of a patient require medical judgement), and reasoned agreement or disagreement with a critical statement also demands aesthetic judgement. Thus the assertion and testing of critical statements ultimately depends upon observation in a straightforward sense of that word, although not upon the simple perception of sensible properties without regard for their aesthetic value. The supposed difficulty that certain critical statements (those which are called here statements of high evaluative power) do not indicate what observations would be relevant to testing them is overcome by construing them in relation to those other statements (called here statements of high descriptive power), with which they are joined in critical argument, which do entail the relevant critical observations. Having disposed of the misleading logical distinction which cut critical statements off from one another, critical arguments can now be conceived of as homogenous, coherent units; the internal logical relations between critical statements can be described, and the work of art can be restored to its rightful place as the referent of critical assertion. Although a detailed analysis designed to test my theory of critical argument is reserved for the next chapter, my conception of critical statements may be given additional support here by examining a short critique of

Vermeer's The Love Letter.

The passage is from Part Four ("Aftermath of the Absolute") of André Malraux's The Voices of Silence.<sup>66</sup> He is discussing Seventeenth Century Dutch painting in terms of the effect upon art of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, attempting to show how revolutionary changes in the "Socio - religious" conception of the world was reflected in the characteristic style and subject matter of the Dutch school.<sup>67</sup> "If he was to make good, the Protestant painter of those days needed either to display genius or to make shift with values of a non-spiritual order: to belong to the aristocratic school of English painting or to the bourgeois school of contemporary Holland. Thus he applied himself to exploring a world, still in the making, of the non-religious, and this was the contribution that he made to European art."<sup>68</sup> Malraux accounts for the failure of many Dutch painters (Lastman, Elsheimer, Boel and Aert de Gelder, for instance) after Rembrandt to achieve more than a minor excellence in terms of "the fewness of subjects and their repetitiveness."<sup>69</sup> "Their realism had a narrow range; apart from landscape, all they did was to raise to a slightly higher level the tavern picture, the conversation piece, the dinner-party or gay-life scene.... What they depicted was the hollowness of the world, though, as is the way with an art which aspires to decorate the home, they camouflaged its hollowness with the anecdotal and the sentimental."<sup>70</sup> The grounds of this judgment lie in the contextual background of Malraux's history of art. In order to fully understand the meaning of (the reasons

for) these remarks, one must master the conceptual scheme of his exposition. This is too complicated to formulate in the space available here, but some notion of the point of view from which Malraux criticizes the Vermeer must be given.

Malraux has been arguing that with the weakening of the religious impulse that had inspired the greatest Italian art, painters had to find some new set of values to serve as the dominant stimulus of their art. The values implicit in the Dutch painting which he judges to be less than great were the social values of the burgher society of Holland. He characterizes these works as charming, anecdotal, and sentimental, and wishes to show that the best of Vermeer's work is distinguished from them on all three counts because Vermeer had realized "that the depiction of a world devoid of value can be magnificently justified by an artist who treats painting itself as the supreme value."<sup>71</sup> What he attempts to show about the painting he criticizes is that Vermeer was not primarily concerned with recording a charming scene of Dutch home life, nor with suggesting a sentimental story, but rather with making a composition whose value is independent of its merits as illustration or its suggestiveness of real-life situations.

Neither Malraux's historical explanation of the new style and subject matter which appeared in Holland in the Seventeenth Century, nor his judgement of the representative painters of that school are here in question. Nor, for that matter, is the criterion of value implicit in his discussion of this picture in question. In order to test the strength of Malraux's



argument that this canvas exemplifies "the transfiguration of the world into painting"<sup>72</sup> (i.e., a dominant concern with formal values) and that it shows how "Vermeer ushered in a new phase of art,"<sup>73</sup> one would have to range far over the history of art and over aesthetic theory. The adequacy of the criterion he uses would invite discussion if the cogency of his argument for the value of The Love Letter was in question here. But at this point I wish only to illustrate the view of critical statements that I have been presenting, and to support my description of them by showing how they perform in Malraux's argument.

The scene is framed in an abstract foreground, the left part of which (despite the oblique line) links up with the curtain, the chair and the wall, which blend into each other almost indistinguishably. The Intimists would have treated this spatial recession corridor-wise, according to the canons of a set perspective and with graduated values; Vermeer uses the wall at the back as a backcloth defining the picture space. Between the two planes, back and front, treating this space as a cube, he paints the servant - to whom the broadness of the style and the intensity of the tones impart the solidity of a caryatid - and the woman playing the lute, whose paradoxically massive lightness and almost bovine gaze make us forget that her face is constructed like the faces of the Young Woman with a Water Jug and the Woman Weighing Pearls. The tiles extending from the door to the two women and harmonizing so well with the slippers and domestic objects which create a well-defined depth, might symbolize this architecturally ordered schema. The letter has no importance, and the woman none. Nor has the world in which letters are delivered; all has been transmuted into painting.<sup>74</sup>

The first sentence might be taken as expressing descriptive propositions, and assuredly it does describe certain features of the work. But it describes them from a particular point of view, from the point of view of an observer whose perceptions are controlled by his interest in the aesthetic relationships



of what he observes. Malraux does not report facts based upon observation of empirical properties; his remarks presuppose a judgement of the value within the composition of the features to which his remarks refer. His characterization (description and evaluation) of the relation of the left foreground to the right involves a judgement which requires, for one thing, a technical knowledge of colour harmony. The statement "The scene is framed in an abstract foreground," which certainly imparts descriptive information, does not make the kind of assertion that an empirical scientist would make - much less the kind of statement that would be made in order to express or to arouse emotion or to issue a command. It provides information relevant to deciding upon The Love Letter's value and to distinguishing it from certain other realistically pictorial works. The second sentence draws out this critically relevant implication of the first by illustrating the difference between Vermeer's style and the others'. The term 'abstract', as used here, is a critic's adjective; whether or not it is correctly used must be settled by observation; but the observer must have sufficient technical knowledge of painting to be able to distinguish between an abstract treatment and one employing illusionist perspective. In order to appreciate the evaluative significance of the statement, he must understand Malraux's conception of the development of painting well enough to know that the term 'abstract' denotes a feature of the painting marking a new stylistic departure which reflects the introduction of a new conception of the kind of value that painting

must serve.

The statements of the first sentence, then, have both descriptive and evaluative force, and their correctness may be ascertained by any observer possessed of an understanding of the concepts used in Malraux's critical history of art and of the technical knowledge required for understanding the formal relationships of a composition. The descriptive power of these statements is obvious enough; it is their evaluative force that might be overlooked through neglecting the function assigned to them in this context, namely to distinguish Vermeer's style from that of his contemporaries and predecessors by showing that he anticipated developments which culminated in the "modern art"<sup>75</sup> of our own time. On the other hand, whereas the evaluative force of "all has been transmuted into painting" is clear enough, the remark may seem to be lacking descriptive power. The remark expresses approval of Vermeer's not having subordinated the purely painterly concern with the formal values of his composition to literal representation and anecdotal interest. The statement's descriptive power derives from the context; read out of context, the statement not only fails to provide any descriptive information but also to make any intelligible assertion whatsoever. Interpreted against its contextual background, this concluding remark is seen to be a compendium of the particular descriptions and evaluations provided by the preceding remarks. In itself, it appears to entail no observations relevant to testing its appropriateness. Taken in conjunction with the statements of higher descriptive power from

which it is derived, it leaves no doubt as to the characteristics of the painting to which it refers. One must first understand that by this statement Malraux means that in building up the picture Vermeer has not been distracted by consideration of realism, charm, or sentimentality from giving that highly stylized rendering of his subject which the formal design of his composition requires. Thus the statement, when clarified, can certainly be tested by the observations of anyone capable of making discriminations between the style of Vermeer and that of Boel, say, or of Aert de Gelder. Assistance is given for ascertaining just what observations are relevant to the concluding statement by the statements of higher descriptive power which precede: "he paints the servant - to whom the broadness of the style and the intensity of the tones impart the solidity of a caryatid" is an example.

The higher the descriptive power of a critical statement the more specifically are the observations relevant to testing it indicated. The higher the evaluative power of a critical statement the more clearly is the critic's appraisal of the work revealed. Critical statements are not, however, distinguishable in a clear-cut way as performing one or the other of two different functions, that of providing information about the work of art and that of providing information about the critic's appraisal of it. Statements of high descriptive power are the result of critical judgement; the features that the critic chooses to mention and the way that he characterizes them are determined by his evaluative, not purely fact-reporting,

procedure. His value judgements are implicit in his descriptions. On the other hand, statements of high evaluative power are equally about the work of art. They are based upon critical observations of works of art (i.e., observations directed and controlled by an interest in the aesthetic value of what is observed), and they are to be confirmed by the critical observations which they, in conjunction with the statements of higher descriptive power from which they are derived, entail. The descriptive import of the statements which support them is implicit in them, as in natural science particular descriptive statements are implicit in an empirical generalization. Those statements which comprise descriptive and evaluative power in nearly equal degree - those which, according to the operative metaphor of this theory, fall midway on the descriptive-evaluative scale - best illustrate the dual function of all critical statements and the way that it is combined in a single remark. Malraux's paragraph supplies an example of such a statement: "The tiles extending from the door to the two women and harmonizing so well with the slippers and domestic objects which create a well-defined depth, might symbolize this architecturally ordered schema."

A description of the logical structure of critical argument may now be given on the basis of the foregoing conception of critical statements. The problem is simply to explain how the statements of a piece of critical writing are related. Ridding critical discourse of the misleading distinction

between statements of fact and statements of value has removed the main obstacle to solving this problem. The logical principles involved in coherent critical argument can now be explained by showing how transitions are made from statements of high descriptive power to statements of high evaluative power.

## Chapter 5

### Critical Argument

This inquiry into the logical structure of critical discourse is designed to set forth the conditions underlying the inferences made within critical argument. References have been made to most of these conditions in the previous chapters, and the main point of this chapter is to bring these scattered remarks together in a brief and coherent explanation of how statements of high evaluative power can be inferred from statements of high descriptive power. The key to this explanation of critical inference is provided by a principle derived from the conception of critical statements as constituting a continuous range rather than as occupying one or the other of two logically distinct classes. According to this principle, evaluations are implicit in statements of high descriptive power, and descriptions are implicit in statements of high evaluative power. The logical coherence of a critical argument is a function of the consistency of its statements. And the question of whether one statement is consistent with another in the same argument can be analysed into the question of whether the descriptive element and the evaluative element



of the first statement is consistent with the descriptive element and the evaluative element, respectively, of the second. In so far as it is ever possible to decide whether or not the meanings of different statements of whatever kind are consistent, it is also always theoretically possible to decide whether the meaning of two or more critical statements are consistent. This means that it is theoretically possible to determine whether a statement in which a critical judgement is explicitly asserted is consistent with another statement in which the judgement is implied. And thus it is possible to describe the relations between critical statements as logical relations, and to exhibit the conditions which permit of a distinction between valid and invalid inference in critical discourse.

Either one or the other of two contradictory assumptions may underlie any expression of dissatisfaction with the cogency of critical argument. A writer may object that some particular critical judgement has not been justified. Or he may complain that no critical judgement whatever can be justified. In the first case it is implied that critical judgements can in principle be justified, but in the second case just this claim is expressly denied. It will be instructive to ask with what an 'unjustified' critical judgement is being contrasted in both cases.

In the first case it is quite obviously being contrasted with critical judgements supported by logically adequate argument. It is implied that in the rejected argument the

statements advanced to support the judgement are untrue or irrelevant, or that the criteria of value to which appeal is made are irrelevant or inadequate, that the statements are inconsistent, or that the argument is in some other way defective. Such allegations have point only if the possibility of constructing a critical argument free of these defects is admitted. And this admission must be freely made by anyone who argues seriously about the justification of any particular critical judgement.

But anyone who denies the possibility of logically justifying any critical judgement is plainly not contrasting the 'unjustified' critical judgement with any other critical judgement. He is, apparently, contrasting it with judgements of quite a different kind about which he thinks it is proper to speak of logical justification. His charge that critical judgements are logically incorrigible is based upon the discovery that critical arguments do not exhibit certain logical characteristics recognized as essential to cogent reasoning in other fields of discourse. This discovery is certainly interesting, but it does not warrant restricting the notion of logical justification to certain chosen fields of discourse. The view that whereas a scientist's or a mathematician's argument may be cogent a critic's can at best be merely convincing rests uneasily upon preference for certain sets of logical rules to the exclusion of all others. There is a difference between rational and irrational talk by critics and the notion of logical justification is indispensable for marking it. It

is not easy to believe that anyone who reads critical literature as expert discourse on the value of works of art doubts that this is a genuine and important difference. It is abandoned only by philosophers disposed to insist upon the superiority of methods quite inappropriate for criticism.

The logical dogma that sanctions appraising all kinds of argument according to the standards derived from one has caused needless anxiety not only about the respectability of critical discourse. The so-called 'problem' of induction as sometimes formulated is a product of this pernicious reasoning. In recent times more than one writer has argued the pointlessness of objecting that inductive inference does not satisfy the requirements of deductive inference.<sup>1</sup> It is equally beside the point to complain that critical inferences are not made according to the rules governing the inferences of either empirical or exact science.

Describing the long history of attempts to 'justify' induction, Max Black remarks on the neglect of what is meant by 'justification'. "It should have been made clear," he says, "for instance that 'justification' is a relational notion, whose exact specification varies with the type of standard of justification to which appeal is to be made. Where no standard of justification is acceptable, the notion of justification becomes vacuous; where divergent standards are accepted, different, but not necessarily conflicting types of justification will be sought."<sup>2</sup> He points out that from Hume onward scepticism about justifying induction arose from the inevitable

failure to show that inductive inference satisfies a deductive standard of justification, and asks "what reasonable ground can be given for arguing from the mere difference of two things to the lesser cognitive value of either term of the inequation?"<sup>3</sup> This is the question that must be asked of philosophers who would exclude discourse about aesthetic value from the realm of meaningful, informative, objective assertion because it does not conform to the logical pattern of discourse of some other kind. Black attributes the persuasiveness of sceptical arguments against the possibility of justifying induction to equivocation between "'justification' in a 'common' or 'everyday' or 'practical' sense to that of 'justification' in some 'strict' or deductive sense."<sup>4</sup> Precisely this kind of equivocation accounts for the plausibility of the claim that critical statements about a work's value are, unlike scientific statements, neither right nor wrong. When representative arguments for this view were considered in the last chapter (pp. 194-195), it was found that by 'meaning', 'significance', 'having sense', neither Carnap nor Ayer meant what is ordinarily meant by these terms but were using them in a technical sense appropriate for contrasting genuine empirical statements with pseudo-empirical statements. Since critical statements happen not to be empirical statements at all, these terms, in this technical sense, have no application to critical remarks. Nor is the standard according to which they would be applied relevant to critical discourse.

What is required is a standard for critical argument by

reference to which justified critical judgements can be distinguished from unjustified ones. Almost nothing has been done toward providing such a standard, and one of the main causes of this omission is the unreasonable discouragement that has followed the discovery that critical argument does not satisfy the standards of totally different kinds of argument. To attempt to lay down the rules for cogent critical argument would be an ambitious project, and if it is not to take the form of arbitrary legislation, it must be preceded by a patient study of the logical structure of extant criticism. It is commonly believed (and it seems most unlikely that the belief is wholly groundless) that not all arguments for critical judgements are equally cogent. An attempt to discover the logical characteristics which distinguish cogent critical argument from its opposite would appear to be a legitimate assignment for philosophical aesthetics. The modest contribution of this thesis to such a project consists in pointing the need of investigating criticism as a unique form of argument, removing some elementary confusions between it and other forms of discourse, and in describing some of its more rudimentary characteristics.

The character of any description is determined by the purpose for which the thing or event is described. The kind of information that a writer wants to provide about a thing determines what features it is relevant for him to deal with and the kind of language appropriate for denoting them. A critical description of a work of art characterizes the work's

observable features in terms of value. The selection of features for mention, and the terms used to characterize them, are determined by the critic's intention of communicating his aesthetic judgement of the work of art discussed. Therefore, every feature of a work of art mentioned by a critic is mentioned because it is taken to be relevant to the question of the work's aesthetic value.. And the language used about these features, although often deceptively 'factual' in appearance, bears a constant reference to the aesthetic value of what it denotes.

Critical literature provides countless illustrations of the evaluations implicit in statements of high descriptive power. In the following paragraph, the writer's value judgement is not explicitly stated, but it is unmistakably implicit in his critical description:

The Moscow vysotnye zdanija or "tall buildings" bear a marked resemblance to New York's 1913 Woolworth building, but to Woolworth Gothic the Soviet architects added ornaments borrowed from classical sources, and some of their own devising. Thus all eight vysotnye carry tall spires mounting garlanded Red Stars and as many Doric and Romanesque pilasters, rococo arches, turrets, flying buttresses, roof-pergolas, asparagus-shaped domes, gingerbread plaques and ferro-concrete statuary as the construction will stand.<sup>5</sup>

All of the statements in that paragraph are perfectly satisfactory as description. Everything that they assert about the Moscow buildings is open to confirmation by any observer who understands the architectural terms employed. Nevertheless, the writer's aesthetic judgement of the buildings is clearly implied by his description of them. The features of the



buildings that he has chosen to mention and the terms he has applied to them have been determined by his purpose of communicating his critical judgement. These statements clearly imply an unfavourable critical judgement. Such statements are able to imply an aesthetic judgement because they are based upon observations made from the point of view of a preoccupation with aesthetic value. The critic's evaluations are implicit in his statements of high descriptive power. That they are so is a necessary condition of critical inference.

An understanding of this first condition of inferring a statement of high evaluative power from statements of high descriptive power is essential to an accurate conception of the structure of critical argument. It yields an explanation of the logical relations between statements, which inquiries operating with a false notion of critical statements found an insoluble problem. The problem was to show how statements of high evaluative power, statements which explicitly assert the critic's judgement of a work's value, could be derived according to any logical principle from statements of high descriptive power, statements which record the critic's observations of the work. So long as the latter kind of statements were taken to be statements of fact, the assertion of pure empirical propositions, their ability to provide the grounds for the assertion of a value judgement remained logically unaccountable. But when it is recognized that these statements are making covert assertions about the aesthetic value of what is observed, it can be understood that the statements of high evaluative

power inferred from them are merely rendering explicit the evaluations implicit in them. From the critical description of the Moscow buildings quoted above, for instance, statements of higher evaluative power can be inferred. 'These buildings are imitative of outmoded styles, incongruously incorporating the features of many styles, and periods', 'They are excessively decorated', are examples of statements which assert the critic's aesthetic judgement of the buildings more explicitly and which are consistent with the evaluative import of his primarily descriptive remarks.

In Chapter I I argued against the view that a statement from which no imperative can be derived is not genuinely evaluative. Since being expounded by Carnap, Ayer, and Stevenson, this view has more recently been put forth by P. H. Nowell-Smith and R. M. Hare. Both of them have inherited the principle (inspired and sustained by a failure to distinguish between the function of moral statements and of critical statements) that all value statements provide an answer to the question, 'What shall I do?'<sup>6</sup> Since Hare's objection to the kind of solution I am proposing to the problem of the logical relationship of critical statements depends upon this principle, it will be convenient to consider his argument again here.

In The Language of Morals the logical problem of evaluative discourse is posed in this fashion. From an argument consisting of purely factual statements no imperative can be derived; the argument provides no "reason for doing something,"<sup>7</sup> and is therefore not evaluative. On the other hand,

an argument that begins from a supposedly self-evident moral principle is in no better position to conclude with an imperative; in the major premise which states the self-evident principle the predicate must function as a value term, and in the minor which asserts something to be the case it must function as a descriptive term. A deduction from such premises involves a fallacy of an ambiguous middle term and is therefore invalid.

Hare then discusses attempts, of which my theory of critical implication is an instance, to go between the horns of this dilemma by way of a principle of inference less rigorous than the traditional one of logical entailment.<sup>8</sup> His explanation of the genesis of this type of theory is applicable to the one I am developing here: "Let us first glance at the history of this type of theory. It is, I think, clear that its immediate origins are to be found in the attack by writers of the verificationist school upon ethics [and aesthetics] as a branch of philosophy."<sup>9</sup> The method of the theories he has in mind differs from my own, and the differences are worth noting. "The theory is intended to save ethics [aesthetics] from this attack by showing that moral [critical] judgements are, after all, good empirical propositions, only their method of verification is different from, and somewhat looser than, that of ordinary fact - stating sentences. Thus they are indeed inferable from observations of fact, but in a looser way."<sup>10</sup> I wish to maintain not that critical judgements are "good empirical propositions" but that they are statements of a unique

kind, and not that they are "inferrable from observations of fact" but rather that the phrase "observations of fact" used with reference to critical discourse is misleading when contrasted with 'judgement of value'. Nevertheless, Hare's argument is worth considering here. It reveals in a striking manner, although unintentionally, that important difference between moral discourse (as he conceives of it) and critical discourse which rules out an objection which might otherwise be brought against my theory.

A statement, however loosely it is bound to the facts, cannot answer a question of the form 'What shall I do?'; only a command can do this. Therefore, if we insist that moral judgements are nothing but loose statements of fact, we preclude them from fulfilling their main function; for their main function is to regulate conduct, and they can do this only if they are interpreted in such a way as to have imperative or prescriptive force. Since I am not concerned here with moral judgements as such, I shall leave till later the question 'How is the prescriptive force of moral judgements related to the descriptive function which they also normally have?' I am concerned here with the more fundamental problem of what sorts of reasoning can have as their end product answers to questions of the form 'What shall I do?' .... Here it will suffice to show why, although prescription and description may be combined in the same judgement, description is not and never can be prescription. In other words, I am going to give reasons for holding that by no form of inference, however loose, can we get an answer to the question 'What shall I do?' out of a set of premisses which do not contain, at any rate implicitly, an imperative."<sup>11</sup>

If critical arguments were construed as concluding with a "prescription" (a command), Hare's objections would be as telling against the notion of critical implication as they are against the notion of evaluative inference introduced into ethics. (Just how telling is beside the point, since the

cogency of the moral theories he discusses is not in question.) But the "main function" of criticism is not "to regulate conduct," and a theory of inference designed to explain the relations of the statements of critical discourse is immune to his attack.<sup>12</sup> The view that the aim of all moral argument is to arrive at an imperative may be an useful hypothesis for the study of the logic of moral discourse. But a logic founded upon this view could not explain the structure of critical arguments. For they have a different aim, and their study requires another hypothesis.

The transitions from statement to statement within a critical argument, then, do not involve inferring statements of one kind from a set of statements of a logically distinct kind. They involve rendering more and more explicit the evaluations implicit in those statements which are essentially descriptive in import. One of the standards that a critical argument must satisfy, therefore, requires that the evaluation of a work of art asserted in the statements of high evaluative power be consistent with the evaluation implied in the statements of high descriptive power.

A passage from Tovey's criticism of William Walton's Viola Concerto may now be examined for evidence of the condition which I have described as underlying critical inference:

The concerto begins with two bars of orchestral introduction.... The viola enters with a broad lyric melody in A minor. The collision between C sharp in the accompaniment and the C natural in the melody is bold, but it is resolved in the classical way. Nevertheless it is destined to become an unresolved thing in itself and, as such,



to be the initial and final motto of the whole work.... [I]t's first appearance...is at high pitch in the course of a sequence that sweeps round a whole enharmonic circle of keys. But the figure soon detaches itself as an individual actor in the drama, and claims derivation from the first two notes of [the introductory melody in A minor].

What may be conveniently called the second subject...first appears in D minor.

Its essential feature is the coiling of a sequential figure across the rhythm and across the harmony at every sort of angle. Its transformations are shown in every subsequent cantabile that is not derived from [the introductory melody in A minor]. Another new figure originates most of the rapid passages in the sequel, and from it, if we wish to use classical terminology, the development may be said to begin. [The introductory melody] becomes fierce in an entirely new rhythm which, sometimes reduced to monotone and ragtime, alternates dramatically with developments of [the second subject], which steadily grows in beauty and pathos. As the drama unfolds, the motto... asserts itself. The last phase of the development is introduced when the viola makes its exit with [the new figure which followed the introduction of the second subject], and the orchestra, entering...in ominous agitation on the dominant of C sharp minor, rouses itself to tragic passion, and with grand classical breadth works its way round to the home dominant, and so to a pathetic slow decline in which the later figures of the main theme...are heard solemnly augmented.

Over the still reverberating dominant pedal the viola re-enters with a two-part version of the ... introductory bars, expanded into a short cadenza and leading to the return of [the opening melody in A minor]. While the viola breaks into a running accompaniment, the melody, softly delivered in a higher octave, makes a single, simple statement rounded off with a pathetic cadence, and the viola adds a line of coda alluding to [the second subject in D minor] and ending with the motto. The whole movement must convince every listener as a masterpiece of form in its freedom and precision, besides showing pathos of a high order.<sup>13</sup>

The favourable judgement of this movement explicitly asserted in Tovey's concluding sentence is implicit in his critical description of it. Evidence of each of the evaluations of



this triadic judgement can be discerned in the preceding statements of higher descriptive power. The predicate ("a masterpiece of form in its freedom and precision") ascribes to the movement as a whole general characteristics which have been determined by certain particular features. Thus the critical point of certain statements made about particular features becomes apparent only when it is realized that they are intended to evaluate these features as contributing toward the entire movement as "a masterpiece of form in its freedom and precision." In the statement "The collision between C sharp in the accompaniment and the C natural in the melody is bold," the predicate "bold" ascribes to the feature cited a quality that is compatible with a movement judged to have the aesthetic value Tovey assigns to it. One could not infer without contradiction from that statement that the form of the movement was 'academic' or 'inflexible'. Nor could one infer from the remark that the dissonance "is resolved in the classical way" that the form of the movement was characterized by 'slackness' or 'looseness' or 'want of technical competence'. In describing the nature of the resolution that Walton effects, Tovey implies the factor of precision.

An examination of Tovey's other statements of high descriptive power shows that they all function in the same way. They characterize some feature of the concerto in terms which are consistent with the descriptively vague (because highly general) but evaluatively powerful terms applied to the form of the movement as a whole by the statement of highest evaluative power.

Tovey's critical description of the motto's first appearance being "at high pitch in the course of a sequence that sweeps round a whole enharmonic circle of keys" is consistent with his critical judgement of the movement as being "a masterpiece in its freedom." This evaluation is implicit in the primarily descriptive remark and also in these: "It's essential feature is the coiling of a sequential figure across the rhythm and across the harmony at every sort of angle." "[The introductory melody] becomes fierce in an entirely new rhythm which, sometimes reduced to monotone and ragtime, alternates dramatically with developments of [the second subject]." The compatibility of the evaluative import of all Tovey's statements is evident throughout the argument. The judgement of the movement "as a masterpiece of form in its precision" merely renders explicit an evaluation implied by Tovey's previous remarks of higher descriptive force: "Its transformations are shown in every subsequent cantabile that is not derived from [the introductory melody in A minor]." "[T]he orchestra ... with grand classical breadth works its way round to the home dominant." Similarly, Tovey's judgement of the movement as "showing pathos of a high order" is inferable from the evaluative element of foregoing statements: "[T]he orchestra, entering... in ominous agitation on the dominant of C sharp minor, rouses itself to tragic passion, and with grand classical breadth works its way round to the home dominant, and so to a pathetic slow decline in which the later figures of the main theme ... are heard solemnly augmented." "While the viola breaks into a running

accompaniment, the melody, softly delivered in a higher octave, makes a single, simple statement rounded off with a pathetic cadence..."

This analysis is intended only to reveal a necessary condition of cogent critical inference. The satisfaction of this condition is not in itself sufficient to guarantee the cogency of any critical argument. However, any critical argument that does not satisfy this condition (which requires that the evaluations asserted in its statements of high evaluative power be consistent with the evaluations implicit in its statements of high descriptive power) can be rejected as involving self-contradiction. The logical rule made available through an understanding of this condition may serve, therefore, to discredit a critical argument but not to sanction one.

The analysis invites a series of objections. It may be argued that the rule is useless because there is no test available for distinguishing between critical arguments whose statements are consistent in their evaluative implications and critical arguments whose statements are not. Because of the imprecision and flexibility of ordinary language, the question of whether the implications of two different statements are the same or not is not a question that can ever be answered with assurance in any particular instance. It will almost always be possible to make a fairly plausible claim for the consistency of the evaluations implied in one statement with those implied in another. But there will be no way to prove either this contention or its contradictory. Argument on such a

question cannot be expected to rise above the level of inconclusive disputation about the meaning of highly ambiguous words.

This objection does not rest upon secure semantical ground. Ordinary language is admittedly flexible and, compared with the language of exact science, even imprecise. But the flexibility and imprecision of the language used in criticism ('ordinary' language for the most part) is not so radical as to make it impossible to determine whether two statements are consistent or not. The words 'beautiful', 'splendid', 'superb', 'exquisite', 'sublime', 'ugly', 'repulsive', 'wretched', 'offensive', and 'pedestrian' are all 'flexible' in that they may all be used in an innumerable number of contexts and applied to an unlimited variety of things or situations. And they are 'imprecise', potentially, in that the fine distinctions in meaning between some of them may be blurred by careless use, or in that any one of them may be used injudiciously upon occasion. Nevertheless, if all of these words were predicated (in the above order) of one thing or event, it would be possible to recognize the first five assertions as being compatible with one another and the last five as being similarly compatible, and also to recognize any one of the first five assertions as being incompatible with any one of the last five. There is, therefore, no defect inherent in the language that critics use to prevent discrimination between arguments whose statements are consistent and those whose statements are not.

It might be argued that an insuperable barrier against showing that the statement of a critical judgement and its

supporting statements are logically related is illustrated by Tovey's argument and that my analysis has missed the point of it. Even if it could be shown that the evaluative import of all Tovey's statements are consistent, it does not follow that the critical judgement explicitly asserted in his concluding remark is warranted by his preceding remarks or that it could be inferred from them. The claim made for the value of the concerto in Tovey's concluding sentence certainly appears to be stronger than any entailed by his previous remarks. And it seems that a reader who agreed with all the other statements might dissent from the last without contradicting himself. If this possibility is admitted, the claim that the statement of highest evaluative power is implied by (or inferred from), or in any way logically derived from the statements of high descriptive power, must, apparently, be forfeited.

This objection is based upon a conception of critical argument contrary to the one maintained throughout this thesis. Specifically it is based upon a theory of logical consequence such as Abraham Kaplan lucidly formulated in his essay "On the So-called Crisis in Criticism":<sup>14</sup>

Among the facts described are some which are the defined equivalents of the appraised value character. The aesthetic value of the object consists in its possession of certain properties, so that the statement that it has those properties entails that it is aesthetically valuable. The premise cannot be affirmed and the conclusion denied without contradiction.<sup>15</sup>

Kaplan's clear statement of what anyone holding an entailment theory of the logical relationship between critical statements

is committed to brings the alleged weakness of my argument into sharp focus. I wish to maintain that there is a logical relationship, an implicative relationship, between the statements of a critical argument which permits the inference of statements of high evaluative power from statements of high descriptive power. I am trying to describe some of the conditions upon which these inferences depend, and to formulate certain rules of critical inference by which invalid critical argument can be distinguished from valid. But I am forced to admit that what Kaplan calls the 'premise' (certain statements of high descriptive power) may be affirmed and that what he calls the 'conclusion' (certain statements of high evaluative power) may at the same time be denied without contradiction. This admission seems to preclude calling the relationship between such statements 'implicative' or 'inferential'.

The defense consists in pointing out that although assent may be withheld from certain statements while those from which they were inferred are granted, no statement which is incompatible with the inferred statements could be asserted which would not also be inconsistent with the statements already affirmed. What is implied by a set of statements of high descriptive power, or what is legitimately inferable from it, is not one particular statement of high evaluative power but rather an indefinite number of statements of high evaluative power, any one or more of which may be admitted on the basis of their consistency with the evaluative implications of the primarily descriptive statements. Denial of a statement of high



evaluative power inferred from statements of high descriptive power which are affirmed involves contradiction only if the denial entails giving assent to some other statement of high evaluative power which is incompatible with the first. The possibility of denying a statement ('This is not a masterpiece, but it is certainly very good') and, without contradiction, conceding the statements from which it was inferred marks the difference between syllogistic and critical inferences. This difference is overlooked in Kaplan's formulation of the logical entailment theory.

He takes the concluding statement of a critical argument to be a deduction from the preceding ones; but this, according to my view, is not an apt characterization of its function in the argument. What is asserted by the last sentence is not a conclusion deduced from a set of premises; the final statement performs a function logically indistinguishable from that performed by all the other statements in the argument. It provides critical information about the concerto, i.e. it describes the work in terms of value; but so, according to my view, do all the other statements. The statement in question, then, is not related to the others in the same way as a conclusion arrived at by deductive inference is related to premises. It is nevertheless logically related to them as part of a coherent argument, subject to a criterion of consistency which requires that its evaluative import be compatible with that of the other statements with which it is jointly asserted. The notion of logical compatibility as applying to the statements

which are asserted within a single argument but which are not distinguishable as premises and conclusion seems to me to be perfectly legitimate and indispensable for understanding the structure of critical argument.

The possibility to which this objection against construing critical argument as having a logical structure appeals may therefore be safely admitted: a reader might without contradiction agree with all the statements of Tovey's analysis except the last. But this admission does not commit one to the view that the statements of a critical argument are not logically related, but only to the view that they are not related as premises to conclusion. It is open to any reader to agree with some of Tovey's statements and to disagree with others on the grounds that they make too strong a claim for the aesthetic value of the movement. Such disagreement raises no logically interesting question so long as both of the differing evaluations can be asserted in statements which are consistent with the prior critical description. To say that the first movement of Walton's Viola Concerto is 'well constructed' or shows 'considerable technical competence' is quite as consistent with Tovey's statements of high descriptive power as to say that it is "a masterpiece of form." What is precluded by the logical requirement in question is the assertion of statements the evaluative implications of which are inconsistent.

That one or more of Tovey's statements should make a 'stronger' claim than certain others for the value of the movement discussed is in accord with the view of critical assertion

presented here. If the statements within a critical argument are understood as constituting a continuous range and as differing in their relative degrees of descriptive and evaluative force, it is to be expected that some statements will express the critic's evaluation more clearly, explicitly, and forcibly than do others. It does not follow from holding that a critic's evaluations are implicit in his primarily descriptive remarks that his statements of higher evaluative power do not state his assessment of the work's value with greater directness, force, and precision. Obviously they do. If statements of high evaluative power were related to statements of high descriptive power as conclusions are related to premises, then they could contain no more evaluative content than is present in the primarily descriptive remarks. But the relation in question is not of this kind. It is a relation between statements all of which are committed to performing the same dual function of describing and evaluating a work of art, i.e. of describing it in terms of value. It is perfectly consistent with the performance of this dual function that the evaluative force of some statements should be greater than that of others.

The complaint that the consistency of the evaluative import of all the statements within a critical argument does not guarantee the correctness of the inferences from statements of high descriptive power to statements of high evaluative power is therefore without point. For the logical progression of a critical argument is not such that rules of inference derived

from other realms of discourse can be applied to criticism without modification. Nevertheless, critical argument is conformable to logical rules which can be formulated; and the standard of consistency as set forth here is one of them. In making transitions from statement to statement within an argument, the critic is moving toward an ever more explicit and comprehensive assertion of his evaluation of the work. Assessed in terms of what it is that the critic wants to communicate by discussing a work of art, his argument must satisfy the standard of consistency or fail of its purpose. Thus the relation of any critical statement to the others within the same argument can properly be described as a logical relation; and the requirement that its evaluative implication be consistent with the evaluative implication of the other statements with which it is asserted is a logical requirement.

The suggestion that any serious piece of critical writing could ever fail to satisfy this condition may seem odd. However careless a critic's observation, and however eccentric his judgement, he might be expected to keep the evaluative implications of all his statements about a single work consistent, at least throughout the course of a single argument. But in fact it is by no means impossible to find passages of criticism in which this rule of cogent argument is violated. Nietzsche's paragraph in Beyond Good and Evil on the Prelude to the Meistersinger of Nuremberg is an example:

Once again I have heard Richard Wagner's Overture to The Meistersinger anew - it is magnificent, overladen, difficult, and late art that

arrogantly expects a living knowledge of two centuries of music in order to be understood - it is an honor to Germans that the expectation has not been disappointed! What essences and what forces, what seasons and what points of the compass are not mingled here! Now it appears archaic, now unfamiliar and overnew; it is as arbitrary as it is pompously conventional; it is not infrequently roguish, and still more frequently coarse and crude; it has fire and force and at the same time the flaccid, fallow skin of fruits that ripen late. It streams on broad and full; and suddenly [there is] a moment of inexplicable pause, like a hiatus between cause and effect ... but presently the old stream of pleasure sweeps and broadens out again - the stream of manifold pleasures, of old and new delight, a very large factor in which is the artist's delight in himself, which he refuses to conceal, his surprised, happy discovery of the masterfulness of the devices he is employing, his new, newly acquired, untried artistic devices, as he seems to be trying to tell us. On the whole, no beauty, no southernness, nothing of the delicate clarity of the southern sky, no grace, no dancing, hardly any desire for logic; even a certain clumsiness, that is actually emphasized, as if the artist wished to tell us, "it is part of my intention"; a cumbersome costume, something wilfully barbaric and ostentatious, a scintillation of pedantic and venerable trinkets and tags; something German, something many-sided, formless, and inexhaustible in the German manner; a certain German strength and exuberance of soul that is not afraid to hide itself under the refinements of decadence, that perhaps first feels thoroughly at home among the refinements of decadence.<sup>16</sup>

This paragraph is quoted by Max Graf as an example of "productive ... discussions of works of art,"<sup>17</sup> and contrasted with the "unproductive"<sup>18</sup> comments of Eduard Hanslick on the same work. By virtue of their poetic force, Nietzsche's remarks may very well be "productive" of a mood, of impressions and ideas similar to those which he experienced when listening to the Overture. But if read as reasoned discourse about the aesthetic value of Wagner's music, his comments are very likely to



produce bewilderment in the minds of most readers. There are conventions governing the use of critical predicates which are generally enough recognized and sufficiently well established to permit of a distinction between terms which are compatible with one another and those which are incongruous when applied to a single work of art. Of course these conventions depend ultimately upon the sanction of criteria of value. Criteria are often subjects of controversy, and good reasons can be given for altering them. But it is difficult to imagine a defensible set of criteria of musical value that would render Nietzsche's use of terms consistent in their evaluative implications. As the passage stands, the reader can only wonder what reasons (what criteria) Nietzsche could possibly have for claiming that music which is overladen, pompously conventional, coarse, crude, without beauty or grace, almost without logic, and rather clumsy, wilfully barbaric and ostentatious, pedantic and formless and decadent is also magnificent. Hanslick's judgement may have been faulty, but at least his statements are consistent in the value they ascribe to the work:

The Overture is not at all calculated to produce a favorable state of mind in the audience. One after another, it crumbles the leitmotives of the work into a flood of chromatic passages and sequences, finally to fling them in inextricable confusion into a veritable ocean of sound. A composition painfully mannered and positively brutal in its effect.<sup>19</sup>

The obscurity of Nietzsche's critical intention illustrates the importance of this condition of coherent critical argument which requires that the evaluative implication of all the statements of an argument be consistent. This criterion is alone



sufficient to determine the coherence of a critical argument in a particular respect. It is not, of course, sufficient to determine the cogency of a critical argument in all respects. For this purpose additional criteria must be introduced.

A perfectly coherent critical argument may lack cogency because it fails to satisfy another condition necessary to objective and informative discourse about works of art. The statements made about a work of art must be open to a test of correspondence as well as of coherence. They must entail some means of discovering whether or not what they assert about a work of art corresponds to the features of that work. In other words, the statements of a critical argument must not only be consistent in the sense defined above but they must make assertions the correctness of which can be confirmed by observation. No such restriction is imposed by theories of critical argument which rest on psychological foundations. It is compatible with a view of critical statements as being about experiences, about emotions or attitudes, or as being rhetorical assertions devised to evoke emotions or attitudes or to influence behaviour to maintain that a critical argument may be wholly satisfactory in being coherent (consistent in the emotion or attitude expressed or in the emotion or attitude or action that it attempts to elicit) although bearing no correspondence to the work discussed. Indeed, on any such view there can be no question of correspondence at all, since critical statements are taken not to be about works of art but either to be about something else or not to be about anything

at all. But when critical arguments are construed as they are here as consisting of a series of logically related statements about works of art, no such lack of connection between what is asserted and what is observable can be permitted.

A further condition necessary to correct inference underlies the correspondence of the statements of a critical argument to a work of art. This condition requires that the descriptive import of all the statements throughout a critical argument be consistent. Unless the condition were satisfied, it would be impossible in most cases to determine whether the characteristics ascribed to a work of art belonged to it or not. Statements of high evaluative power, which assert the critic's evaluation most clearly and explicitly, are, from the point of view of description, most vague and general. However, such statements do have some descriptive force. To borrow an example from Tovey's analysis above, the statement 'The first movement of Walton's Viola Concerto is a masterpiece of form in its freedom and precision, besides showing pathos of a high order' asserts that the movement has a certain kind of structure and a certain emotional quality which distinguish it from concerto movements of another description. Similarly, the primarily evaluative statement 'This building is an example of derivative traditionalism' would provide sufficient descriptive information to enable anyone who understood how the term 'derivative traditionalism' is used in discussions of architecture to recognize which building was meant if it were erected nearby other buildings of another description, say of

the kind called 'functional'. But the descriptive information provided by either of these two statements, especially of the first, is not precise, detailed, nor explicit; and the descriptive force of many statements of high evaluative power is even weaker. Unless the reader brings to such a statement a very exact notion of the characteristic features belonging to any work to which the predicate is correctly applied, he will require the more concrete information provided by statements of higher descriptive power in order to understand just what features are being attributed to the work. Even so, he will require this more specific kind of information in order to decide whether the descriptively weak predicate of the primarily evaluative statement is correctly applied. This requirement is particularly urgent in the case of predicates whose denotative meanings do not approach the degree of standardization displayed in current usage by 'functional', for instance, or by 'derivative traditionalism'. But the requirement can only be satisfied if the descriptive intention of the critic's remarks are consistent throughout his argument.

The descriptive information implicit in statements of high evaluative power is rendered explicit by the statements of higher descriptive power from which they are derived. Statements of high evaluative power repeat covertly and in highly general terms the critical description explicitly asserted in particular, concrete terms in other statements. What is required of a primarily evaluative statement is that the characteristics which it implies a work to have be those which are

ascribed to the work by statements of higher descriptive power. If this requirement is met, it is possible to discover the descriptive import of a statement of high evaluative power and therefore to determine whether or not that statement corresponds to the work about which it is made.

From the point of view of critical description, the logical progression of the critic's argument is from statements which describe specific features of a work in terms of value to statements about the general characteristics of the work as a whole. The progressive reduction of the descriptive power of critical statements as their evaluative force increases is a function of their expanding generality. The difficulty of testing the correspondence of critical statements to what they are about increases proportionally as their generality increases. This difficulty can be overcome in critical argument only if the descriptive import of all the statements within a critical argument is consistent. When this condition is satisfied, statements of high descriptive power will elucidate the descriptive implications of statements of high evaluative power, i.e. they can be read as rendering explicit the descriptive implications of primarily evaluative remarks. Then by confirming the primarily descriptive statements made about a work of art through a critical observation of the relevant features, the correspondence of the implicit description of the statements of high evaluative power to the work is also confirmed. Further elucidation of the operation of the correspondence principle in critical argument is best given by

reference to a passage of criticism.

The paragraph is taken from Carl Maria von Weber's criticism of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony:

There is no longer any question of clarity and intelligibility, of a display of feeling, as the old composers, Handel and Mozart, supposed. No! Listen to the recipe for the latest symphony, which I have just received from Vienna, and judge for yourself. First we have a slow tempo full of short, abrupt ideas, of which not one is allowed to have any connection with another! Every quarter of an hour, three or four notes - that produces tension! Then a hollow roll on the kettle-drums and mysterious viola passages, all embellished with an adequate quantity of complete silences and rests; finally, after the listener, in utter suspense, has given up the allegro, comes a furious tempo, in which the principle object is to prevent any leading idea from making an appearance, so that the listener is left even more in confusion; modulations from one key to another must not be omitted; but they are nothing to worry over, all that is necessary is...to run through the half-tones and stop on the tonic of the key you want - that ends the modulation. Above all, shun all rules, for rules only fetter genius.<sup>20</sup>

Weber's opening remark asserts his judgement in terms whose evaluative force is strong and direct: the symphony, to take two of the three points, lacks clarity and intelligibility. The remark is not wholly devoid of descriptive power; it implies that the work has certain features which distinguish it from works composed according to the classical rules of harmony. The reader might infer from the remark that the modulations were not achieved by well defined bridge passages, and that the connections between the exposition, the development, and the recapitulation were obscure. But he is given only a very general idea of the work's characteristics, and he requires further details in order to decide whether or not



Weber's primarily evaluative remark is appropriate. These details are supplied by the subsequent statements of higher descriptive force which provide more particular information about the work's features: the ideas (themes) of the opening movement are unrelated; the continuity of the allegro is broken by irrelevant solo passages and periods of silence and is disrupted by a rapid passage in which no melody is discernible; and so on. The consistency of the statements recording these observations with Weber's primarily evaluative remark is apparent enough; a work possessed of such features must lack clarity and intelligibility. Whether or not these statements correspond to the features they purport to describe can be confirmed by observing the work. (If a critic can show a relation between 'the short, abrupt ideas' of the slow tempo, then Weber's statement to the contrary must be rejected.) If these statements are confirmed, then Weber's statement that the work lacks clarity and intelligibility is confirmed also; for that primarily evaluative remark expresses about the symphony as a whole, in highly general terms, the descriptive information provided by the statements of higher descriptive power that Weber makes about the work's particular features.

This claim that critical arguments are in principle capable of satisfying a correspondence test may be attacked at a crucial point. It may be urged that since critical statements, according to the argument of this thesis, do not record empirical observations, do not assert facts, all talk of confirming them by observation is misleading. Since each critical statement,



however high its descriptive power, depends upon an act of evaluation, a critical judgement, the correctness of the information it provides about a work cannot be determined simply by examining the work. The consistency of the descriptive import of all the statements throughout a critical argument may provide a condition necessary to testing the correspondence of statements of high evaluative power to the works that they are about. But the condition is insufficient to guarantee that the test can be made; for this indirect method of testing such a statement depends upon the possibility of confirming the statements of high descriptive power to which it is related. And these statements are in just as difficult a situation. When any degree of evaluative power is attributed to them, they are removed from the class of statements whose members are corrigible through observation.

The argument of the previous chapters should have removed the misunderstanding upon which this objection is grounded. In order to complete the discussion of this topic, however, the complaint may be dealt with here with reference to the example at hand. It is true that the statements here called primarily descriptive are not statements of fact based upon an observation of empirical properties. They are statements making assertions relevant to answering questions about the aesthetic value of the features denoted, and they are based upon critical observations made with the purpose of determining the work's aesthetic value. When Weber asserts that the themes of the opening movement of Beethoven's Fourth have no connection with

one another, he is not making a statement of fact, if by this is meant an assertion which is grounded upon observations in which critical judgement plays no part. As discussed in critical writing, the themes of a symphony are not empirical properties, nor are their relations empirical relations; they are features relevant to the assessment of the composition's aesthetic value. Neither listening passively to the sounds produced during a performance, nor measuring these sounds with the most refined accoustical instruments would yield a critical description of these features. Critical assertion presupposes a concern with the aesthetic value of what is observed and the technical competence required for making the evaluations that are involved throughout the critical process. But the fact that value judgements underlie critical assertion does not render critical statements incorrigible. Not only is Weber's remark subject to correction by other critics whose description of the movement might differ from his, but Weber's mistake, if it is one, could be explained. It might be argued that, as his mention of "the old composers, Handel and Mozart" suggests, he is judging Beethoven's work by inappropriate criteria. He describes Beethoven's symphony as failing to satisfy certain rules of composition to which it was never intended to conform. His observation was faulty; he looked for connections of a certain accustomed kind between musical ideas; failing to find these, he supposed there were no connections of any kind; and so he misdescribed a certain feature of the work. Detection of this error would deprive his statement of highest evaluative

power of part of its support; and if the other primarily descriptive statements were also rejected, then the statement in which he explicitly asserts his judgement would be rejected too.

Another objection that might be raised against my account of critical argument will be more profitable to consider. It may be pointed out that two quite incompatible critiques of the same work may both be perfectly coherent and both pass the test of correspondence. This possibility, which seems to be embarrassing for a view of critical argument as conforming to logical rules and as being grounded in a work's observable feature, must be admitted. Two critics may each select quite a different set of features for discussion. Their critical descriptions of the features may both be correct and introduced into arguments which are both internally consistent but which culminate in statements of high evaluative power expressing conflicting judgements.

This possibility is not in the least embarrassing for my view of critical argument, but only for the view that critical arguments conclude with judgements that are final and absolute. But critical judgements are not final nor absolute. They are frequently revised; no critic's verdict, however well supported, is incapable of being reversed or qualified by further cogent argument. This is the case because the references of a critical argument are never exhaustive; however detailed a critical analysis, it cannot mention every feature conceivably relevant to determining the work's value, and therefore some equally cogent argument that deals with the particular features

ignored by the other argument may terminate in statements of high evaluative power that seem to be incompatible with those of the first. Thus a painter may be praised by one critic for his superb draughtsmanship and abused by another for his weakness as a colourist. In such a case the critics would not be contradicting one another, although one of them expresses a favourable judgement of the work and the other an unfavourable judgement. An appearance of contradiction arises only from supposing that the critics must decide whether the painting is good or bad in some absolute sense, whereas one argues that it is valuable in a certain respect and the other that it lacks value in a different respect.

The kind of disagreement cited as an objection to my view of criticism does not damage it but rather serves as the basis for explaining other critical phenomena. It reveals an important source of critical disagreement which, when understood, accounts for contrary critical judgements without relegating critical remarks to the class of pseudo-statements or their relations to the realm of the non-logical. It does not follow from the prevalence of disagreement amongst critics about the value of works that their assertions are not really about the works they discuss and therefore not subject to correction by independent observers. Nor does it follow that the statements in which their evaluations are explicitly asserted are not inferred in accordance with logical rules from the statements they make about the features of the work. Critics may disagree about the value of a work simply because they have each been

discussing a different group of features.

Clearly, the more detailed and comprehensive a critical analysis is, the more highly general are the statements of high evaluative power that may be derived from it. A writer who critically describes only the ornamentation of a building is entitled to make statements about the architect's taste. But his critical description would not support a judgement of the building as being either a masterpiece or a dismal failure. The assertion of such a judgement would require a discussion of many other features for its support. There are, no doubt, many critical arguments extant whose evaluative claims exceed the descriptive information offered to support them, and these are weak arguments. It is not possible to state a priori rules for distinguishing between critical arguments that are strong and those that are weak in this respect. But the notion of a discrepancy between the relative degrees of an argument's descriptive power and its evaluative power accounts for certain cases of critical disagreement and indicates how they can be settled. A critic who bases primarily evaluative statements of high generality upon a critical description of a very few features is subject to correction by another critic who has analysed the work in greater detail and described more of the relevant features.

The correction of judgement by a more exhaustive characterization of features in part explains the widening consensus of critical opinion about works that have been the subject of critical discussion over long periods of time. The literature

of Shakespeare criticism is so enormous that it is unlikely that further critical discussion will reverse those judgements of the value of his major plays to which most critics now consent. Conversely, critical opinion diverges most widely and most frequently about new works, because every critic's judgement is based upon a partial description. After a period of exchanging critically relevant information, the work becomes better understood; more mature and seasoned judgements of it are made and the margin of agreement widens.

Failure to provide critical descriptions adequate to support judgements is, then, responsible for much weak critical argument. The sources of failure are various. Grillparzer's highly emotive comments on Weber's Euryanthe are unrestrained by any sense of responsibility toward the features of the work and undefended by critical analysis:

This music is horrible. In the great days of Greece this subversion of all melody, this rape of beauty, would have been punished by the state. Such music is a criminal offense. It would bring forth monsters if it were gradually to achieve universal acceptance. This work can please only fools or idiots or scholars or highway robbers or murderers.<sup>21</sup>

This kind of weakness in critical argument may at times have less reprehensible and more complicated causes. Harold Osborne has shown by reference to T. S. Eliot how confusion between arguments designed to account for the excellences or defects of a work and those intended to appraise its excellence or defectiveness leads to evaluations unsupported by reference to the work's features:



Mr. Eliot holds the somewhat dubious belief that if a writer's mental reactions are specially typical of his age, and if he has succeeded in embodying those typical reactions in his writing, then his works are particularly 'significant' and that writing which is in this way significant has always a high level of literary excellence or at any rate greatness. In general he is meticulous to keep psychology and criticism distinct, although even he is liable to occasional lapses. Thus he tells us that Jonson's Catiline fails 'not because it is too laboured and conscious, but because it is not conscious enough; because Jonson in this play was not alert to his own idiom, not clear in his mind as to what his temperament wanted him to do'. Now these statements are inferences from the play as we know it to certain mental processes presumed to have happened in Jonson's mind when he composed it. They may or may not be correct inferences. If they are correct, they may or may not be the cause of certain features in the play which Mr. Eliot judges to be artistic faults. But the psychological causes which he infers are not themselves qualities of the play, and the attribution of causes for deficiencies cannot take the place of descriptive criticism which could point to the alleged defects in the work. Again he says of Blake: 'It is only when the ideas become more automatic, come more freely and are less manipulated, that we begin to suspect their origin, to suspect that they spring from a shallower source'. Now if your purpose is to understand the workings of Blake's unconscious mind, ideas which are thought to spring from a shallower source will be less significant data than ideas which are thought to spring from a deeper source in the unconscious. It may also be true that in general the ideas of Blake which spring from a source deeper in the unconscious are those which are more highly manipulated. But no inferences about the level of consciousness at which ideas originated can take the place of judgement about the artistic excellence or defects of the poetry or supply the place of a descriptive indication of what those defects are. Inferences about psychological causation are not germane to criticism. Yet few writers of criticism have maintained the distinction as meticulously as Eliot. Whenever one reads that 'inspiration has failed' or that 'the artist was insincere', one should suspect that the critic has failed in his task: he has judged that a work of art is defective, has failed to find words in

which to indicate the deficiency descriptively and had offered instead an inferred psychological cause of the undescribed defect. 'You can spot the bad critic', says Ezra Pound, 'when he starts discussing the poet and not the poem'.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the figurative use of language discussed in Chapter 3 (pp. 140-142) is the major cause of descriptively weak arguments. From the striving for literary effect, the attempt to communicate the quality of an aesthetic experience instead of to inform the reader about the nature of the work criticized, the use of simile, analogy, and metaphor emerge terms concerning which there is no possible way of deciding on objective grounds whether or not they are appropriate to the work to which they are assigned. F. L. Lucas's essay on Browning is an example of critical writing in which a gap remains between the statements made about the features of works and the statements rendering the critic's judgement explicit which not even reference to criteria of value can bridge:

And, after all, to the author of things like The Lost Mistress, Love among the Ruins, A Toccata of Galuppi's, Porphyria's Lover, Childe Roland, and St. Martin's Summer, much may be forgiven, even his complete works. For his poetry seems to me like the dry bed of an Alpine torrent down which a flood of vast, untamed energy has roared and foamed itself away, leaving a desolation of dead and bleaching stones; yet here and there a narrow channel where a rush of waters still spins and dances, bright and living, towards its eternal goal.<sup>23</sup>

Although the evaluative intention of such statements may be clear, they appear gratuitous, for neither on the basis of linguistic conventions nor known criteria do the terms in which they are couched seem to be implied by the terms of the prior statements from which they supposedly derive.

Another form of the defect also symptomatic of a weakness for rhetoric can be found in arguments consisting almost wholly of statements of high evaluative power. If the principal function of all or nearly all the statements in a piece of criticism is to render explicit the critic's evaluation of a work, then it will probably be impossible to discover the reasons for his judgement and to come to a decision about their adequacy. The following is an example of critical arguments which are incompetent through giving insufficient information about those features of the works which have determined the critics' evaluations to enable readers to confirm the critics' observations:

Stravinski's new ballet is a great event in the musical world. I consider it as one of his masterpieces, the product of true artistic maturity. It has a majestic serenity about it, and Balanchine's choreography fits it perfectly, classical in style, treated from the modern aspect - the Muses wear a special kind of tutu. The décor was designed by M. André Bauchant, a French painter belonging to a group inspired by the 'douanier' Henri Rousseau. Actually he is exhibiting his works at the Magellan gallery at the present moment. The settings are executed in a fresh, naive, spontaneous style, which is a refreshing change from the pseudo-Greek stuff that we usually get in the theatre. And I think that the choreography is really excellent.<sup>24</sup>

Critical arguments are probably descriptively inadequate in other ways and for other reasons. But it is not necessary to enumerate and describe all the various forms of this general kind of weakness. All that is being claimed here is that there is a distinction to be drawn between critical judgements which are justified by argument and those which are not. That this distinction is genuine should be apparent from the

fact that some critical arguments provide enough information about the features of the work discussed to enable the reader to confirm the critic's comments and that others do not.

The logical progression of critical argument has been described as a series of transitions in the direction of statements of increasing evaluative force. The logical ground of these transitions must be more closely examined. The inquiry can be started most easily by directing it toward a passage of criticism which is simple in structure. The paragraph about the vysotnye zdania will do as a specimen.

When I discussed that passage earlier, I argued that statements of high evaluative power could be derived from it by drawing out the evaluative implications of its primarily descriptive statements. The progression from "Thus all eight vysotnye carry tall spires mounting garlanded Red Stars and as many Doric and Romanesque pilasters, rococo arches, turrets, flying buttresses, roof-pergolas, asparagus-shaped domes, gingerbread plaques and ferro-concrete statuary as the construction will stand" to 'These buildings are excessively and incongruously decorated' is an example of what I mean by a transition from a statement of high descriptive power to a statement of high evaluative power. It seems to me to be in accordance with good usage to term such a transition an 'inference'. Since the logical operation involved in it differs from that performed in either inductive or deductive inference, such inference has been qualified by the term 'critical'.

Critical inference must now be explained in terms of how

the transitions in question are made. I have said, concerning the hypothetical judgement inferred from the critical description of the Moscow buildings, that statements of high evaluative power merely render explicit evaluations implicit in statements of high descriptive power. But this notion of 'rendering explicit' leaves the nature of the logical operation involved only vaguely characterized. It must be explained how one is able to discover and to state evaluations which are present in statements by implication alone. What are the grounds for asserting that the author of this critical description implies that 'These buildings are excessively and incongruously decorated' and, to go further, 'That they are badly designed, architectural failures from an aesthetic point of view'?

Clearly, the inference presupposes a knowledge of the criteria used for judging works of architecture. The only grounds for asserting that the specified evaluations are implicit in the primarily descriptive statements are provided by the criteria accepted by contemporary critics of architecture. 'Imitative of outmoded styles' sums up in a general phrase the particular observations recorded in the description; because of its pejorative force, it asserts the evaluation more forcibly and explicitly. And it derives its pejorative force from the historical fact that imitation, perhaps especially imitation of antique styles, is a feature of architecture of which a modern critic may be expected to disapprove. 'Incongruously incorporating the features of many styles and periods' serves the same function, repeating the descriptive information in terms



of higher generality and gaining in evaluative power by the term 'incongruously'. The justification for introducing this term into the inferred statement is provided by contemporary architectural criteria which hold that incorporating the features of many styles and periods in one building is incongruous. The statement 'They are excessively decorated' functions in an identical way and the grounds for inferring it are the same. The transition to the statement of highest evaluative power can be explained and justified in the same way. According to the criteria in use, buildings of such a description would be judged as 'badly designed, architectural failures from an aesthetic point of view'. The inference of 'They are badly designed, architectural failures from an aesthetic point of view' from 'These buildings are imitative of outmoded styles, incongruously incorporating the features of many styles and periods' and 'They are excessively decorated' will not seem to involve a logically unaccountable leap to anyone who is aware of the criteria used in appraising works of architecture.

The role of criteria in the formation of critical judgement and their function in critical argument have, I think, been misunderstood. At this point it is necessary to correct one mistake about criteria which precludes an understanding of critical inference. The mistake is a consequence of the distinction between descriptive statements and value statements. Unless it is supposed that there is no logical connection between the two kinds of statement, criteria may be invoked as an intermediary, third kind of statement to explain the connection between the



other two. When assured of the truth of the statements which describe a thing, how does one decide upon the truth of the value statements made about it? By referring the descriptive statements to a set of criteria which set forth the descriptive properties generally acknowledged to belong to any one of those things which has the value assigned. An illustration of this procedure may be borrowed from a logician who accepts the descriptive statement/value statement distinction and the interpretation of the role of criteria which this distinction suggests:

...if we knew all the descriptive properties which a particular strawberry had (knew, of every descriptive sentence relating to the strawberry, whether it was true or false), and if we knew also the meaning of the word 'good,' then what else should we require to know, in order to be able to tell whether a strawberry was a good one? Once the question is put in this way, the answer should be apparent. We should require to know, what are the criteria in virtue of which a strawberry is to be called a good one, or what are the characteristics that make a strawberry a good one, or what is the standard of goodness in strawberries. We should require to be given the major premiss.<sup>25</sup>

Construing the logical function of a set of criteria as analogous to that of the major premise of a syllogism leads to the following misconception of the critical process. Statements based upon empirical observation of a work of art are asserted. These are used in conjunction with a statement of criteria for the purpose of inference. A value statement is inferred. As was shown in the preceding chapter, insuperable logical difficulties follow from this view. Briefly, since a statement of criteria is not analytic, it must be taken as an inductive

generalization based upon a series of value statements. From an inspection of a number of things of a particular kind judged to be good a universal proposition is asserted about what descriptive properties such a thing will have if it is a good one of its kind. But any doubt felt about the correctness of the concluding statement of a particular argument will certainly attach to the universal statement that sets forth the criteria. If one questions the grounds for asserting 'This strawberry, being large, red, juicy, firm, and sweet, is good', then he must also question the assertion 'All strawberries that are large, red, juicy, firm, and sweet are good'. Construed as major premises criteria are logically inadequate.

Since the statement 'Yes, it is large, red, juicy, firm, and sweet' seems a perfectly good answer to the question 'Is this strawberry a good one?', this logical predicament appears to result from a misunderstanding. One suspects that criteria do not attempt to function as major premises, and this suspicion was shown to be well founded in the preceding chapter.

Once having abandoned the distinction between descriptive statements and value statements, one is no longer inclined to construe criteria as universal propositions mediating between them. If it were supposed that criteria of value had to connect statements of fact and statements of value, then certainly such a logical strain would be imposed upon them that critical inference would be inexplicable. But such is the logical structure of critical argument that no such impassable barrier is raised between its statements. When all the

statements of a critical argument are understood to have evaluative force, all are seen to bear an implicit reference to criteria. If the criteria were not operative at the beginning of the argument, when all the so-called 'descriptive statements' are being made, the critic would not know whether what he was saying was to the point or not. His remarks would be made at random, only by chance having any bearing on the question of the work's value. The connoisseur of strawberries is in the same position. He says that the strawberry is large, red, juicy, firm, and sweet. He doesn't offer the purely descriptive comment that it is a fruit of the genus Fragaria, having small yellow seed-like achenes on its surface. He is in a position to use words of evaluative force because he is aware of the relevant criteria before he begins to describe the strawberry.

It must not be supposed that I am confusing temporal with logical priority. It might be urged that the speaker's prior acquaintance with the criteria of value of the thing he is discussing is beside the point. It is the place of criteria in the logical structure of his discussion that is in question. Indeed it is; but when the logical distinction between statements of fact and statements of value is dropped, it is seen that criteria must not be construed as a third kind of statement introduced to connect the other two. If criteria are assigned this place in an argument, the fact that all critical remarks are evaluative in intention is obscured, and the critic's reason for making those which have been misleadingly

called 'descriptive' remains unintelligible. So-called 'descriptive statements' are what they are logically, viz. covertly evaluative, because a reference to criteria is involved in their formulation. Criteria are implicit in all the statements of a critical argument, for they are implicit in the argument as a whole, controlling the development of the argument from the beginning. Criteria give a critical argument its cohesion, determining the relevance of each remark to the argument's final intention and the coherence of each remark with all the others. The implicative force of critical statements is a function of criteria, dependent upon the internal consistency which the criteria inherent in the formulation of each statement lends to the argument as a logical whole.

Criteria of value, then, are operative at the beginning of the critical process and are a factor in the formulation of every one of the critic's statements. Just as the nature of a critic's observations is determined by his preoccupation with aesthetic value, so are the features that he describes and the way that he describes them determined by the criteria of value he uses in the evaluation of works of art. A set of criteria is a necessary presupposition of making a critically relevant statement. If a critic had no notion of the criteria relevant to the evaluation of works of art of the kind that he attempts to discuss, it would be by chance alone that his statements had any bearing upon the question of the work's value. To take an example, it is because the critic of the Moscow buildings is aware of a certain criterion of style that commits works of

architecture that combine the features of many dissimilar styles to the class of badly designed buildings that he mentions the variety of styles mixed in the construction of the buildings he is discussing.

It is evident that acquaintance with the criteria of value used in evaluating architectural works was a necessary condition of discovering the evaluations implicit in this writer's statements of high descriptive power. The inferences made from the critic's primarily descriptive remarks are explicable in terms of a knowledge of criteria which are required for the interpretation of critical remarks and for the construction of a critical argument. This explanation can now be generalized to give an account of how transitions from statements of high descriptive power to statements of high evaluative power are made.

The term 'criteria of value' stands for the critic's conception of the general characteristics of works of art of a certain kind which distinguish those works which are valuable from those which are not. A knowledge of the relevant criteria of value constitutes the theoretical aspect of a critic's professional competence in a particular field of art, and the ability to apply them in appraisal and argument his practical expertness. Disagreements amongst critics about which set of criteria should be accepted do not imply that criteria are 'subjective' or in any other way logically inadequate. Physicists also sometimes disagree about certain theoretical principles presupposed in discourse about physical phenomena, but it does not occur to any one to complain that the principles lack



objectivity. Disputed criteria are equally legitimate and similarly indispensable to discourse about works of art. Criteria are a factor in the critical process at its inception, controlling the critic's observations in a manner analogous to the control exerted upon a natural scientist's observations by a hypothesis or a theory. They determine which features are relevant to his argument and the terms appropriate to describing them. A constant factor in critical argument, they account for the evaluative implications of every critical statement. Even statements of high descriptive power bear an implicit reference to them, for they provide a condition necessary to making remarks which are relevant to a description of a work of art in terms of value. They are an essential factor in critical inference. Having determined the assertion of statements of high descriptive power, they govern the transitions made from these to statements of high evaluative power. These transitions would be inexplicable without reference to criteria. Considered in relation to them, it is evident that the logical progression of a critical argument consists in the progressively more explicit assertion of the evaluations concealed in statements which are primarily descriptive in function. Statements of high evaluative power are formulated with reference to the same set of criteria as are the statements of high descriptive power in the same argument. These criteria provide the required 'link' between the statements of critical discourse, the logical ground of the transitions in question. By reference to them, the evaluative import of primarily



descriptive statements can be discovered, and statements of high evaluative power inferred.

This conception of criteria as a condition of critical assertion and inference can be illustrated by another passage of criticism. Here Edward Crankshaw discusses the same buildings, the 'tall buildings' of Moscow:

It is only at close range that the bogus Gothic, the meaningless towers and ornamental features, show up and look silly. And contemplating these, or the remarkable replicas of classical facades and colonnades and pediments attached to cinemas and clinics, the clumsy Soviet renaissance of so many administrative buildings and apartment houses, the acres of coarse and muddled decoration which accumulate on the new facades, one wonders how the positive explosion of constructive vitality represented by all this building could coincide with a perfect absence of creative spirit.

The answer, of course, was Stalin, whose idea of good architecture was formed by a close study of wedding-cakes, and whose ferocious and sustained attack on formalism and cosmopolitanism, which included all the most exciting architectural thought, drove the originals underground and spread the blight of derivative traditionalism over the face of all the land....<sup>26</sup>

The evaluative power of the first paragraph of description is plain enough. The criteria of value in which these assertions are grounded, and by reference to which the inference that the buildings display "a perfect absence of creative spirit" is explained, are revealed in the second paragraph. The criterion according to which the buildings were designed is termed "derivative traditionalism," a general term applied by contemporary critics of architecture to buildings having certain stylistic features, "meaningless towers and ornamental features," "replicas of classical facades and colonnades and pediments," and "coarse and muddled decoration" being among them. The

criterion of value used by Crankshaw in his assessment of the buildings is represented by the terms "formalism and cosmopolitanism" and, later in his argument, by "functionalism." By reference to this criterion which, when stated, asserts in highly general terms what architectural features are valuable,<sup>27</sup> the implicit evaluative import of particular statements about the specific features of the buildings becomes apparent. And the reasons for the transitions from such statements to those which assert more explicitly the critic's judgement of the aesthetic value of the works are understood in the same way.

Criteria of value, then, are presupposed by critical argument and provide a condition necessary to its logical progression. Their part in aesthetic evaluation is extremely complicated, but only their role in critical inference had to be considered here. It is clear that they serve as the logical link between the statements of critical discourse, providing the grounds for transitions from statements of high descriptive power to statements of high evaluative power. By refer~~ing~~<sup>ing</sup> a statement of high descriptive power to them, its evaluative implications can be discovered and expressed in a statement of high evaluative power. This latter statement must maintain reference to the features denoted by the primarily descriptive statements and express the critic's judgement in terms consistent with the criteria that were employed in formulating those primarily descriptive statements.

Thus criteria of value yield another standard of critical argument. The structure of cogent critical argument is

founded on criteria of value. If the same criteria were not operative in the formulation of every statement made about a work of art in a single argument, there would be no guarantee of the argument's logical coherence. The logical relations between the statements of a critical argument depend upon the statements' reference to a common set of criteria. In the absence of this condition, no inferences could be made from statement to statement within an argument and statements of high evaluative power would get no support of a logical kind from statements of high descriptive power.

One should not expect too much of this standard. It serves only to distinguish coherent and incoherent discourse about works of art: a critical argument whose statements are logically connected from a series of independent statements about a work of art. Of course, a critical argument that is coherent may be deemed defective in other ways. The criteria employed may warrant the transitions involved but be repudiated as inadequate, inappropriate, derived from false aesthetic theory, or in some other way unacceptable. Disagreements about criteria of value are interesting, but they have no bearing on that aspect of the logical structure of critical argument considered here. In order to discover the evaluative implications of statements of high descriptive power and thus the logical grounds of the transitions made within a critical argument, it is not necessary to accept the critic's criteria of value. It is only necessary to know what these criteria are.

## Chapter 6

### Criteria and Theory

Throughout this account of critical argument criteria of value have been invoked as the factor upon which critical descriptions and inferences depend for their cogency. The functions assigned to criteria were just those that had to be presupposed in order to explain certain features of critical discourse, and the logical status of criteria themselves has so far been unexamined. No feature of critical argument is more elusive. In many critical arguments the criteria employed are not explicitly asserted at all. Occasionally critics do expound criteria of value during the course of an argument, but more often a reader can only infer them from highly general remarks made about the work under review, or from passing references to other works, or from key words known to signify acceptance of a certain set of criteria. Since criteria of value often appear in critical argument only implicitly, as unexpressed presuppositions, it seems likely that they usually function in a correspondingly covert way in the critical process. This inference from the critic's argument to his aesthetic experience is conjectural. But certainly it does seem

unlikely that critics always have a fully formulated set of criteria clearly in mind when they begin their critical examinations of works of art. There seems to be little reason to suppose that critics form judgements by mechanically referring the observed features of a work to a formula which sets forth the distinguishing features of valuable works of art. It might be expected that critical procedure would be a good deal more sensitive, subtle, and complicated than that. Whatever may be the mode of operation of criteria within the critical process, it is nevertheless the case that by accepting a certain set of criteria a critic is committed to applying it consistently to all works within the specified class that he is dealing with. He may, however, encounter a work that does not altogether satisfy his criteria and which he would nonetheless evaluate in terms consistent with those he applies to works that do. In this event he must modify his criteria in order to account for the new set of aesthetic considerations upon which his judgement is grounded. Conversely, if he judges certain works to be valuable by virtue of having certain general characteristics, then he cannot pass a contrary judgement on some other work also possessed of these characteristics without adducing special reasons for the exception. This is only to say that a critic is expected to show some consistency amongst his judgements, to have a point of view which, while not inflexible, is not forever vacillating, to have, in short, some principles. The substance of these principles is criteria of value which discourage capricious and gratuitous

critical judgements.

It is probably true, then, that the critic need not always be fully aware of his criteria of value when criticizing a work of art; nevertheless, as the expressible content of his sense of what is valuable in a certain field of art, they exert some control over his perceptions and thus on his selection of the features to be discussed, as well as determining the succession of inferences through which highly evaluative statements are derived from primarily descriptive ones. The emanation of criteria from experience has been described by Katherine Gilbert, and she also makes the point that as part of a critic's intellectual furniture criteria are operative during the critical process, even when the critic does not acknowledge them in his argument. She writes that the critic contemplates a work of art "with a mind constituted for the time being by the energies incorporated in it from many experienced objects. The thing is looked at by the hardly acknowledged light of almost innumerable examples that have instilled into essence of critical mind. And in this sense the critic measures his object by something external to the object. In so doing, he does not stretch it on a Procrustean bed, but - so we must allow him - still measures it by a standard relevant, and on a properly liberal interpretation, immanent."<sup>1</sup> On the following page she adds: "The critic with his strong native wit, then, passes constantly and sensitively from poem to poem, fugue to fugue, picture to picture, building up a sense of style. This sense of style is at once an awareness of the defining marks and



relations in kindred works and an operating norm in respect to them."<sup>2</sup>

Critics are not always reticent about the criteria of value they operate with; sometimes they state them unequivocally, and argue in their defense. And even when the criteria used in judging a work are not stated in the argument, it should be possible to formulate them. The subject term of such a statement refers to a class of works (to works of a certain kind having a certain value, e.g. 'good tragedy') and the predicate to certain general characteristics. Such statements represent the penultimate grounds of all critical judgements and contain the locus of many critical disagreements.<sup>3</sup> The view taken of criteria decides the view to be taken of critical argument and judgement. If it is held that criteria of value are nothing other than a critic's preference for works having features of a certain general kind, and that the statement of criteria is simply the expression of such a personal preference, it will be concluded that after all the ground of a critical judgement is the arbitrary one of personal preference, and that the critic's reasons for the judgement he asserts are in the last resort subjective. It will be held on this view that the only point of critical argument is to decide whether or not a particular work actually has the features that a critic cites in support of his judgement. When this has been decided, no more can be done to reconcile his judgement with a contrary one asserted by some other critic who admits the presence of the features but does not share his colleague's preference (or

aversion) for them.<sup>4</sup> Nor will there be any good reason for a third person to accept one of these judgements rather than another, for there will be no objective reasons for endorsing one set of supporting criteria rather than the other. This view of criteria, which implies that critical judgements rest upon a subjective foundation, will be found upon examination to have little to recommend it. Discussions of criteria are plainly not always mere advocacy of personal preferences but rather, in some cases, reasoned argument offered in defense of a proposition to the effect that works having features of a specified kind are valuable in a certain field of art. In order to discover how acceptance of any particular set of criteria can be justified, it is necessary to understand the logical character of the statements in which they are or could be asserted.

I believe that a study of the genesis of criteria of aesthetic value and of the transformations which they undergo in critical practice will contribute toward an understanding of them. Such a study will be facilitated by formulating a preliminary notion of the logical character of criteria which will serve as the controlling conception of the inquiry. The conception which I shall propose and use here is suggested by the following considerations. Since it is by reference to a critic's criteria of value that the precise significance of the terms which he applies to a work of art is to be understood, it may be said that criteria of value perform a defining function. In fact it may be said without unduly extending the

meaning of 'definition' that when a critic states a criterion he is stating a definition, stating what he understands the term defined ('Decorative art,' for instance) to mean ("art lacking in a certain value.... the depth of human feeling."<sup>5</sup>) The subject term of a statement of a criterion denotes a certain class of works and the predicate sets forth its defining characteristics. Such definitions are obviously not tautologies; the predicates cannot be derived analytically from the subject terms. Rather the predicates designate the features which belong to any work which in the speaker's judgement falls within the subject class. A critic who accepted the criterion would not apply the subject term without qualification to any work to which the predicate was inappropriate. Neither will these definitions be equational, stipulations that for the purpose of discussion subject and predicate will be taken as equivalent. They are intended to assert what is the case. But they are not empirical generalizations either; for what is the case here is not a matter of fact but a matter of the values judged to belong to certain works. The common characteristics of a group of works are being described in terms of value for the purpose of defining that group. This kind of definition may be called 'descriptive definition'.

The notion of a descriptive definition, of which Stephen C. Pepper is the author, seems to me to be a sound one upon which to build a conception of criteria. Pepper expounded the notion during the course of a series of lectures given at Harvard University in 1944 and now published under the title: The

Basis of Criticism in the Arts.<sup>6</sup> Believing that "the problem of criticism is ultimately the problem of the evidence for the legitimacy of the criteria of criticism,"<sup>7</sup> Pepper treats this problem by eliciting from four distinct schools of criticism their alternative criteria of aesthetic value. Each criterion, adopted by one of the schools as a basic standard of critical judgement, embodies some highly general conception of what a work of art is.<sup>8</sup> Each defines the aesthetic field in different terms, i.e. each of them imposes its own conditions which any object must satisfy in order to qualify as a work of art. Prior to the formulation of any of these alternative definitions, the aesthetic field is circumscribed by a common sense ostensive definition: the class 'works of art' is taken to be composed of just those things that people have always been content to call works of art. This vague, indiscriminating test definition of the field is then refined by a descriptive definition.

Pepper's theory is in many ways incompatible with the argument of this thesis. "The judgments of criticism I shall be seeking," he says, "will be based on facts. They will be factual judgments of a certain kind purporting to be true. Being empirical judgments, however, they will not claim to be certain, but only probable to a degree justified by the evidence."<sup>9</sup> This way of speaking, this way of using the words 'facts', 'factual', 'empirical', 'probable', and 'evidence' seems to me misleading for reasons I have already given. Nor does it seem to me that Pepper's subsequent argument justifies this usage with its

implication, which he affirms, "that evaluations of the beauty of things should be judgments of fact."<sup>10</sup> The criteria of value he formulates certainly appear to involve considerations other than purely factual ones. As the concluding sentence of his book suggests, it is his opposition to subjectivism and to scepticism about the possibility of justifying aesthetic judgements which provides the motive for using terms borrowed from empirical science: "With due consideration of personal idiosyncracies of inheritance, and the influences of environment and culture, there does not seem to be any insurmountable reason according to our analysis why highly objective judgements should not be obtained not only of the aesthetic content of a work of art but also of its aesthetic value."<sup>11</sup> But it is not necessary to provide criticism with the guarantees of natural science in order to defend the objectivity of its judgements against scepticism. Indeed, such strategy is likely to wreck the defense, as the weakness of such an argument as the following attests. He says that "whenever the skeptical point of view is probed to its roots, we unearth some idea to the effect that judgements of art are entirely matters of personal preference, to which is added the non sequitur that therefore there is no factual basis for the judgments. This last is an astonishing addition when we think about it. As if human preferences were not facts, and as if they did not have a firm basis in the structures of human behaviour and the human mind."<sup>12</sup>

This retort will not silence the sceptic. He argues that

because critical judgements are based upon personal preferences they are devoid of objectivity. He will not withdraw the charge by being told that whether or not a certain critic prefers certain works to others is a question of fact. He is well aware of this. The ground of his complaint is that there is no way to show that the value a critic assigns to a particular work does in fact belong to it. The only way to answer him is to show him that his talk of 'facts' in this context is inappropriate. The kind of fact he has in mind is simply irrelevant to a critical discussion; the critic is not making statements of fact, nor is he pretending to do so. Pepper's talk of "empirically justifiable aesthetic judgments"<sup>13</sup> confuses the issue by implying that the critic must justify his judgements by citing the kind of evidence (factual evidence) that natural scientists are expected to provide in support of their assertions. But this kind of evidence is useless for the defense of a critical judgement. The sceptic is not wrong to point out that critical judgements cannot be justified by reference to facts. But he is wrong to conclude from this that critical judgements can't be justified in any way at all.

Enough has been said about Pepper's theory to make clear that I do not accept it in its entirety. There is no need to criticize it further, since I wish to borrow from it only the notion of descriptive definition which is, I think, substantially sound. But even the use that I wish to make of this notion differs slightly from Pepper's. The main point of his inquiry in The Basis of Criticism in the Arts is to formulate



four different descriptive definitions each of which serves four different aesthetic theories as the ultimate basis of critical judgement. Rather than beginning with an analysis of aesthetic theory, and then showing how highly abstract conceptions of aesthetic value are utilized in critical practice, I prefer, in consistency with the procedure adopted throughout this thesis, to begin with particular passages of criticism and to examine the criteria of value that are asserted or implied in them. It will be found that these criteria are far less general than those derived from Pepper's analysis; what is descriptively defined by stating them will not be the entire field of art but rather sub-classes of widely different ranges of inclusiveness such as tragedy, romantic fiction, lyrical music, visual art of sensibility, and the like. In other words, the grounds of the arguments to be discussed first in the following analyses are not the ultimate ones to which critics might conceivably be pressed back by persistent argument (a subject to be discussed later); rather they are those upon which critics directly rely in particular instances.

It must not be supposed that I assume either that the value of works of art depends upon some feature, quality, or characteristic shared by all, or that I think critical evaluation must base itself upon such an assumption. Undoubtedly such questionable assumptions have infected much theorizing about aesthetic value. Highly general conceptions of what constitutes the value of works of art such as Pepper formulates as the basis of criticism in the arts appear to involve the dubious claim

that there is some factor common to all works of art of value. It seems to me certain that the criteria of value actually used in criticism are far more detailed, specific, concrete, and restricted in their reference than any of the four descriptive definitions formulated by Pepper. A fully formulated set of criteria would specify a vast number of features as belonging to any work which realized a high degree of artistic excellence. Claiming that critical description and inference depend upon criteria consisting of generalizations about the features which characterize works of a certain kind, having a certain value, does not commit one to the view that aesthetic evaluation must presuppose some single feature common to all valuable works of art. It is also worth mentioning here that it would be a gross and misleading simplification to construe works of art as being judged to be in an absolute sense either good (perfect) or bad (worthless). Few works satisfy a set of criteria completely or fail utterly to satisfy it; most satisfy it in certain respects and to a certain degree. As understood here, then, criteria of value neither involve any assumption about a common factor, nor do they yield absolute judgements. Some of the aesthetic theories upon which criteria of value are grounded may make some untenable claim concerning a common factor. But they need not do this; and if one of them does, a reason may be provided for denying a particular set of criteria its theoretical support, but not for denying the possibility of justifying any set of criteria whatsoever.

Having forestalled a possible misunderstanding of what it

is that statements of criteria claim to be common to works of a specified class, an attempt may now be made to describe the logical character of criteria by discovering the source and method of their derivation and the kind of reasons that can be given for accepting any one of them. Pepper's notion of descriptive definition provides a very convenient way of conceiving of them at the outset of the inquiry.

Pepper's theory of descriptive definition is proposed in opposition to the view which, he says, is currently held by many writers,<sup>14</sup> that definitions contain no truth reference. He explains descriptive definition by contrasting it with two other commonly recognized types, viz. ostensive and equational definitions. By giving an ostensive definition, "The symbol to be defined, S, indicates by some agency such as pointing, an object, or group of objects, or type of object. The symbol is thereby said to be defined by that object."<sup>15</sup> In order to give this kind of definition of the term 'work of art', one points out a number of things for which the expression 'work of art' has come by convention to stand. Pepper symbolizes ostensive definition in this fashion:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & 16 \\ & \text{indicates} & \\ S & \xrightarrow{\hspace{1.5cm}} & O \\ & \text{is ostensively defined by} & \end{array}$$

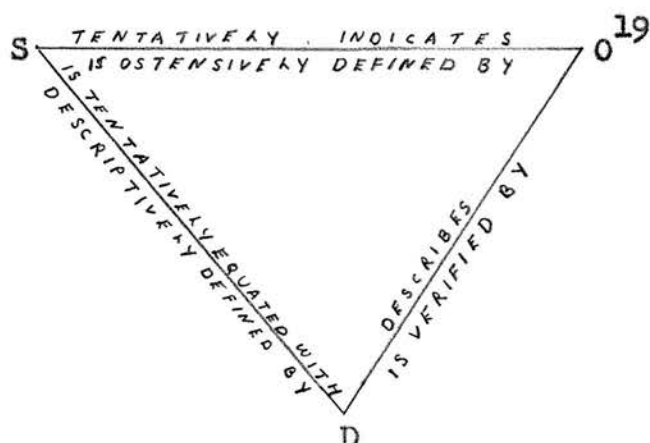
Equational definition, which equates the symbol to be defined with a group of other symbols, is "a mere analytical convenience,"<sup>17</sup> allowing a writer to use one term throughout an

argument to stand for several. Used correctly (as in mathematics), an equational definition does not imply that the referent of the symbol defined is the same as that of the defining terms, nor that people ordinarily mean the same thing by the two terms of the equation. An equational definition makes no assertion about the world whatsoever, and therefore can be neither true nor false. Pepper symbolizes it in the following way:

$$S \xrightarrow[\text{is equationally defined by}]{\text{is equated with}} UV^{18}$$

A descriptive definition differs from an ostensive and an equational definition by combining the features of both with a third element. The symbol to be descriptively defined is ostensively defined by indicating the objects for which the symbol is conventionally used to stand. The symbol is then also given a tentative equational definition; i.e., the objects denoted by the symbol to be defined are described by stating the characteristics supposed to be common to them all. The third factor in this kind of definition involves a reference from the equational definition to the objects which constitute the field named by the symbol. Thus the equational definition, the statement of certain features belonging to all things to which the symbol *S* is to be applied, is required to be appropriate to the things for which the symbol *S* is actually used. Conversely, whatever is admitted into the class of things for which the symbol *S* is used must have the characteristics set

out in the definition. This kind of definition is best understood by reference to Pepper's diagram which exhibits its triadic structure and the relations between the three terms.



Aristotle's argument in the Poetics illustrates the method of establishing a descriptive definition. 'Tragedy' is the symbol to be defined. Aristotle first defines it ostensively by reference to those poetic works traditionally accepted as being tragedies. In the first few chapters of the treatise he distinguishes these from works of various other poetic kinds and notes certain features characteristic of tragedies alone and thereby arrives at his definition: "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of the emotions."<sup>20</sup> In those remaining parts of the work which are concerned with tragedy, this definition is elaborated and the

ostensive definition is at the same time amplified. In elaborating this definition, or, what is the same thing, in describing in greater detail the characteristics common to all tragedies, Aristotle is not merely recording his observations of the ostensive field. Throughout he makes evaluations in respect to the features isolated: "Of all plots and actions the episodic are the worst,"<sup>21</sup> and "The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal [of Intention], as in the Oedipus"<sup>22</sup> are two among numerous instances. He is not, therefore, merely stating what features a thing must have in order to be called a tragedy. He is also stating which characteristics make a tragedy a good one and which do otherwise. His statements of these characteristics, his criteria in other words, proceed from the definition and are, in fact, an elaboration of it. But the elaboration is made with direct reference to the objects which constitute the ostensive field. His criteria, then, are in no sense a priori or arbitrary. They are derived from the tragic works read and staged in his own day. Hence his use of criteria for judging tragedies does involve circularity, viz. circularity of the kind that results inevitably from the historical fact that the production of works of art precedes criticism. Aristotle, like all critics, must make judgements in order to formulate criteria for use in future judgements. But this kind of circularity could no more be excluded from the critical process than from the procedure of empirical science in which hypotheses for the interpretation of observational data must themselves be derived from the



interpretation of observational data.

Throughout the Poetics the description with which tragedy is tentatively equated or descriptively defined (to use Pepper's terms) is built up by critical examinations of the works to which the term 'tragedy' refers. Evaluations are, as I have said, involved in these examinations; for Aristotle is not observing and describing facts but is analysing the works with regard to the aesthetic value of certain features and describing these features in terms of value: "But, of all recognitions, the best is that which arises from the incidents themselves, where the startling discovery is made by natural means. Such is that in the Oedipus of Sophocles, and in the Iphigenia; for it was natural that Iphigenia should wish to dispatch a letter. These recognitions alone dispense with the artificial aid of tokens or amulets."<sup>23</sup> The criteria of good tragedy so derived are not merely statements of what Aristotle happens to prefer. When he thinks it necessary, he gives reasons for asserting that certain features are valuable in this form of art: "As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole."<sup>24</sup>

The importance of adjusting the tentative equational

definition (the description) to make it appropriate to the works which ostensibly define 'tragedy' can be shown by reference to the history of the Aristotelian 'rules' of tragedy. With the publication of Trincaveli's Greek text of the Poetics and Pazzi's Latin version, Aristotle's treatise became familiar to most cultured men of the Renaissance who took an interest in the arts; and, sponsored by Corneille, Boileau, Dryden and Pope, the Aristotelian conception of tragedy was accepted by both French and English critics of the neo-classic period. It is a historical fact that most literary men expected tragic works of whatever period to conform to Aristotle's definition and that they used the set of criteria set forth in the Poetics as the basis of their judgements of this form of art. It is now generally held that these criteria were inappropriate for many of the works that they criticized, for these works were not conceived according to Aristotelian principles. They differed in important ways from Greek tragedy, but were not necessarily failures for that reason. The insistence upon criteria which had been derived from a study of the Greek dramatists was dogmatic and stultifying, for ultimately it could succeed only in showing that modern plays had failed to be what their authors had never intended them to be.<sup>25</sup> What had happened, of course, expressed in terms of the theory of descriptive definition, was that the ostensive definition of 'tragedy' had had to be revised but critics had failed to adjust their tentative definition or description accordingly. New works, constructed on dramatic principles different from those

used by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, but making a claim to the name 'tragedy', had been written. The ostensive reference of 'tragedy' had been altered, and if relevant criteria of value were to be available to the critic, the description had to be changed also in order to accommodate these new works. The first phases of this process of revising a descriptive definition can be detected in the critical writing of the later neo-classicists. Johnson, for instance, who in principle subscribed to the criteria of value inherited from Aristotle, in practice recognized the aesthetic value of Shakespearian tragedy. That he was by no means ready to break with the current (Aristotelian) conception of the defining characteristics of good tragedy is everywhere evident in his work, as when he says of Shakespeare's plots that "his plan has commonly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence."<sup>26</sup> But the need of reconciling the dramatic success of Shakespearian tragedy with its infraction of classical prescriptions led him to question the cogency of some of these rules. His argument against the unities of time and place well illustrates the revision of criteria and the kind of reasons that are offered in arguments about criteria. He first states the reason for making the unities of time and place one of the criteria of good tragedy:

The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The criticks hold it impossible, that an action of months or years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours; or

that the spectator can suppose himself to sit in the theatre, while ambassadors go and return between distant kings, while armies are levied and towns besieged, while an exile wanders and returns, or until he whom they saw courting his mistress, shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality.

From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of space. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Medea could, in so short a time, have transported him; he knows with certainty that he has not changed his place, and he knows that a place cannot change itself; that what was a house cannot become a plain; that what was Thebes can never be Persepolis.<sup>27</sup>

Johnson then shows that this reason is unacceptable, adoption of the criterion resting upon a false assumption: "It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramattick fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited."<sup>28</sup> His argument against the unities is as objective as any argument can be, and whether or not one accepts it, at least his rejection of them as criteria by which to judge Shakespearian plays certainly does not rest upon the expression of a personal preference:

The objection arising from the impossibility of passing the first hour at Alexandria, and the next at Rome, supposes, that when the play opens, the spectator really imagines himself at Alexandria, and believes that his walk to the theatre has been a voyage to Egypt, and that he lives in the days of Anthony and Cleopatra. Surely he that imagines this may imagine more. He that can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies, may take it in half an hour for the promontory of Actium. Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation; if the spectator can be once persuaded, that his old acquaintance are Alexander and Caesar, that a room illuminated with candles is the plain of Pharsalia, or the bank of Granicus,

he is in a state of elevation above the reach of reason, or of truth, and from the heights of empyrean poetry, may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature. There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in extacy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calen- ture of the brains that can make a stage a field.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players.... The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?<sup>29</sup>

Johnson decided "By the authority of Shakespeare"<sup>30</sup> to dis- pense with the unities as providing a criterion for the judge- ment of plays and he found reasons to justify this decision. In other respects he was more conservative. From observing in Shakespeare's plays features unaccounted for by Aristotle's definition of tragedy, Johnson concluded that none of them, however valuable as dramatic works, could properly be called 'tragedies'. While redefining the term descriptively, he still felt some scruple about using it in any sense other than the one sanctioned by Aristotelian usage. It is instructive to read his argument as typical of the first phase of descrip- tively redefining a critical term to make it conform to what is actually found in the ostensive field:

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous criti- cal sense either tragedies or comedies, but com- positions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination....

Out of this chaos of mingled purposes and casual- ties the ancient poets, according to the laws which



custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrors of distress, and some the gayeties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation, known by the names of tragedy and comedy, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied, that I do not recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.<sup>51</sup>

The classical definition of tragedy derived from Aristotle was revised on the basis of such studies as this one of Shakespeare by Johnson. The necessity of altering the definition, its elaboration as description, and the associated criteria was a consequence of the works actually being published under the name of tragedy. The differences between these works and those classed as tragedies on the basis of the old definition accounts for Johnson's reluctance to extend the reference of the term to include these new works. Nevertheless, in analysing Shakespearian drama he was already engaged in revising the descriptive definition of tragedy. And now, of course, no one would say that King Lear and Hamlet "are not in the rigorous and critical sense" tragedies. The ostensive reference of 'tragedy' has been extended to include these works and the description of tragic works has been altered to accommodate them.

A more generalized theory of criteria of value may now be based upon this brief account of the derivation and revision of the classical rules of tragedy. The assumption that what has been found to be the case with the criteria of tragedy evolved from Aristotle's descriptive definition is similarly the case with the criteria used in other fields of art can be



tested by examining a variety of critical arguments in order to discover the logical character of the criteria stated or implied in them. It seems that the notion of criteria as descriptive definition is proving itself a useful hypothesis for the inquiry. But since the notion is likely to encounter some resistance, possible objections to it must be anticipated and answered.

Since a descriptive definition, the assertion of a criterion or set of criteria, is neither descriptive in the usual (empirical) sense nor a definition in any ordinary sense, it may be asked what justification there can be for using this term. The term is, of course, merely a semantical convenience; it is more suggestive (and less cumbersome) than 'statement of a criterion or set of criteria', for which it stands here, of the characteristics of this feature of critical argument. As a naming term, it is intended to give a clue to what statements of criteria logically are. As for a descriptive definition not being genuinely descriptive, it is the case that it is not logically equivalent to a descriptive statement (or generalization) such as would be admitted into the discourse of empirical science. But there is more than one way to describe a thing, and to describe in terms of value is not only quite as defensible as to describe in terms of empirical properties but it is to describe in the only way that is critically relevant. Evaluative description is the typical mode of critical discourse. It seems to me that statements of criteria are descriptive in this sense, that they state as generalizations in terms of

value what features belong to certain classes of works. As statements of the form that might be given in answer to questions such as 'What do you mean by "good tragedy"?', it would seem that statements of criteria might be called a definition without unduly straining the usual sense of 'definition'. The view presented here, that in describing in general terms the features of tragedy, Aristotle was in some sense defining 'tragedy', does not represent an altogether new way of speaking. Corneille, for instance, when discussing the Poetics, said that Aristotle "causes charm of discourse to enter into the definition of Tragedy."<sup>32</sup> And in his dialogue, An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Dryden has Lisideius ask "how was it possible to be decided who writ the best plays, before we know what a play should be?"<sup>33</sup> and then "to give the definition of a play"<sup>34</sup> as follows: "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind."<sup>35</sup> Lisideius remarks that what he has formulated is "rather a description than a definition."<sup>36</sup> According to the terminology used here, what he has offered is a descriptive definition. As a definition, it is only a genere et fine, as Crites objects, requiring further elaboration to set forth the differentia which will render this highly general statement of a criterion into a set of criteria sufficiently detailed and particular for distinguishing not only between which things are plays and which are not but also between which plays are good and which are not. It seems to me helpful to have a name for statements of

criteria that is suggestive of their logical characteristics. And it also seems to me legitimate to regard such statements as definitions of a kind, namely of a descriptive kind, for they assert what a critic means, in general, by the subject term by asserting what features do belong to works to which he is prepared to apply the subject term. In the preface to his New Bearings in English Poetry F. R. Leavis speaks of his "criterion of significance, ... 'significance' being defined by the generalities that I venture upon."<sup>37</sup> The generalities to which he refers set forth the defining characteristics (i.e., describe) the works that he admits into the value class of poetry "that is important by any serious standards,"<sup>38</sup> and at the same time they serve to exclude "certain serious and intelligent verse-writers whom...I have not dealt with because they seem to be not poets."<sup>39</sup>

If despite this confirmation found in the usage of critics anyone still finds the name given here to statements of criteria objectionable, he is free to replace it by another. Undoubtedly there are other ways of conceiving of criteria that would facilitate a description of their logical structure and function. 'Critical generalization', for instance, would not be an inappropriate name; it would suggest the seemingly tenable thesis that criteria consist of generalizations based upon a critical study of the features upon which the value of certain kinds of works depends. The name would also connote the fact that formulations of criteria are constructions of a kind subject to the alterations required to account for new works of

art which introduce new aesthetic considerations. I prefer the term 'descriptive definition' simply because it seems to me to suggest more forcibly and precisely the genetic and functional characteristics of criteria. Since criteria of value determine a critic's use of terms, it is by reference to them that the meaning of his statements is explicable. Criteria of value can be invoked to explain why the critic applied certain terms of high evaluative power to a work, and thus they perform a defining function. But they do not simply define in terms of synonyms. They state what features a thing must have to warrant a critic's predicating of it the terms in question. Defining a term in this way requires a description of the things to which the term is applied. The term 'descriptive definition' is therefore used here to designate criteria because it connotes these two salient facts, that the sense given to critical terms in a particular context must be defined by reference to the criteria of value employed, and that this defining function is fulfilled by generalized critical descriptions of the works to which the terms are applied.

Despite the care taken to exhibit the uniqueness of descriptive definitions in respect to their purpose and method of formulation, it can hardly be expected that they will escape involvement in long standing controversies about definition. It will very likely be asked on which side of the traditional division of definitions descriptive definition belongs. Is it a species of nominal definition or a new kind of real definition? The answer, of course, depends upon how these two kinds of

definition are themselves defined. In a recent book on the subject, Richard Robinson has shown that both of these terms have been applied to a great variety of defining procedures differing from one another in their methods and purposes. In a preliminary statement of what has been understood to be the purposes of these two kinds of definition, he remarks:

The purpose of nominal definition is something to do with nomina or words or signs or symbols. I cannot describe it accurately at this stage, and later it will become clear from its sub-divisions; but roughly the purpose of nominal definition is to report or establish the meaning of a symbol. The purpose of real definition, on the other hand, is nothing to do with nomina or words or signs or symbols. It is something to do with res or things.<sup>40</sup>

It is clear from the account already given of descriptive definitions that they do not suit the purpose of either nominal or real definition, as Robinson conceives of it - or, more accurately, they suit the purposes of both together. A descriptive definition certainly does have "something to do with nomina or words or signs or symbols"; as construed here, it has to do with critical terms, and its purpose is to formulate the determining conditions of their use. But a descriptive definition also has "something to do with res or things," namely with the works of art to which critical terms are applied, and its purpose is to stipulate the features which a work must have in order to warrant the predication of certain terms of it.

If by 'nominal definition' is meant what Robinson calls 'word-word definition', then descriptive definitions cannot be construed as nominal definitions, but must be understood as combining the functions of both nominal and real definition.



If what Robinson calls 'word-thing definition' is taken to be a legitimate form of nominal definition, then descriptive definition can be taken as a form of nominal definition and the difficulties attendant upon the notion of real definition avoided.<sup>41</sup>

However descriptive definition be classified on the basis of the traditional distinction between kinds of definition, it must be understood as explaining the meanings of terms by indicating to what these terms are used to refer. This can be accomplished in a statement of criteria only through the use of other terms; but the point of formulating criteria, a descriptive definition, is not merely to announce that the definiens and the definiendum will be used as equivalent in meaning. The point is to indicate what features a work of art to which the definiendum is applied may be expected to have. This distinction between purposes may appear artificial. For a criterion may be understood as requiring that a work to which the subject term of its statement is applicable either must have certain features or that certain other terms can be properly applied to it. Since the only way of indicating that a work does have certain features is by applying certain terms to it, there seems to be no significant difference between the phrases 'must have certain features' and 'certain other terms can be properly applied to it'. The key word of the second phrase is 'properly', with its implication that the assignment of critical predicates requires justification in terms of the features which a work of art actually possesses. The difficulty raised by the consideration that the question of what features a work



actually possesses can be answered only through the assignment of yet more predicates is resolved in practice by the fact that predicates of high evaluative power are inferred by the mediation of criteria from predicates of high descriptive power.

Statements of criteria conceived as descriptive definition, then, serve a double purpose. They define things, good tragedy, masterpieces of musical form, significant contemporary poetry, derivative architecture, in the sense of stating what features belong to these things. They define terms, 'good tragedy', 'masterpieces of musical form', 'significant contemporary poetry', 'derivative architecture', in the sense of stating what any critic who accepts the set of criteria means by them.

'Means by' here means what features he implies a work so-called to have, or, alternatively, what other predicates he is in consistency prepared to apply to any such work.

Objection may be taken to a consequence of these remarks, namely that identical terms may have quite different meanings in the arguments of different critics. This theoretical possibility is not denied; but admitting it merely commits one to the now generally recognized principle that the meanings of words are determined by the context in which they are used. Criteria of value, as part of the contextual background of a critical argument, are instrumental in determining the meaning of crucial predicates. But total anarchy in the use of critical predicates is in practice averted because there is in fact wide agreement amongst critics on criteria of value.

The reader may have been reminded by this discussion of

criteria as descriptive definition of Charles L. Stevenson's concept of persuasive definition. There are similarities between his view of definition and the one presented here, but there are also such differences as might be anticipated in view of the previous discussion of his Ethics and Language. In a highly suggestive chapter of that book, Stevenson shows how definitions are used to support value judgements. In order to justify the application of terms with evaluative force to things or situations, writers frequently argue that the descriptive meaning of the terms are such that they can be properly used to denote the things or situations in question. When a writer encounters opposition to denoting something by a certain term, he may re-define the term in order to persuade his opponent that his usage (judgement) is warranted. The re-definition does not usually claim that the term has some hitherto wholly unsuspected meaning, but rather that certain features rather than others in the thing designated are crucial for determining whether or not the term is correctly applied to it. For instance, Clive Bell defines the term 'work of art' (meaning visual art) by stating the quality common to all things to which that term is properly applied. He calls this quality 'significant form', claiming that it is essential to the aesthetic value of a work of architecture, stained glass, sculpture, pottery, carpetry, fresco, or oil painting, and that such other characteristics as faithful representation and psychological interest are merely adventitious. The formal features which according to him constitute the defining characteristics

of great art ("without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless"<sup>42</sup>) had long been recognized as contributing to the aesthetic value of many great works. The novelty of his definition used as a criterion lies in its rejection of such features as accurate representation, an ethically or psychologically interesting subject matter, appealing colours, as irrelevant to a work's aesthetic value. Anyone who accepts Bell's critical judgements, for instance of Cezanne, for Bell's reasons, must also accept his definition. For that matter, the purpose of his definition is to justify the inclusion within the class of aesthetically valuable art the work of certain artists, of whom Cezanne is one, and the exclusion of the work of others, for example that of Frith. "The purport of the definition," Stevenson says, "is to alter the descriptive meaning of the term, usually by giving it greater precision within the bounds of its customary vagueness; but the definition does not make any substantial change in the term's emotive [evaluative] meaning. And the definition is used, consciously or unconsciously, in an effort to secure, by this interplay between emotive [evaluative] and descriptive meaning, a redirection of people's attitudes [critical judgements]."<sup>43</sup> Stevenson finds examples of the procedure in everyday argument about value, in advertising, ethical and economic theory, and elsewhere. His literary example is worth quoting here:

Many literary critics, for instance, have debated whether Alexander Pope was or was not "a poet." The foolish retort would be, "It's a mere matter

of definition." It is indeed a matter of definition, but not a "mere" one. If the word "poet" is to have an unusually narrow sense, Pope will become, beyond any doubt for such a sense, no poet. This, so far from being an idle conclusion, has important consequences; it enables the critics to deny to Pope a laudatory name, and so to induce people to disregard him. A persuasive definition, tacitly employed, is at work in re-directing attitudes. Those who wish to decide whether Pope was a poet must decide whether they will respond to the influence of the unfavorable critics - whether they will come to dislike Pope's work enough to allow him to be deprived of an honorary title. This decision will require an intimate knowledge of literature and of their own minds. Such are the important matters which lie behind the acceptance or rejection of the tacitly proposed, narrow definition of "poet." It is not a matter of "merely arbitrary" definition, then, nor is any persuasive definition "merely arbitrary," if that phrase is taken to imply "suitably decided by a flip of a coin."<sup>44</sup>

The subjectivist bias, indicated by the terms 'emotive' and 'attitude' in the earlier quotation, makes itself felt here also. It seems to me far from certain that the point of a 'persuasive' definition of 'poetry' that excludes Pope is "to induce people to disregard him" or to make them "dislike Pope's work." That was not exactly Mathew Arnold's purpose in declaring that "Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose."<sup>45</sup> But then I do not agree with Stevenson that the function of definition in argument about value is primarily emotive. However, subject to this reservation about his using 'emotive' in place of 'evaluative' and 'attitude' in place of 'judgement', his example of the critical use of definition seems to me instructive, as are his more general comments on a "much used but too little studied type of definition":

Definitions are usually studied as a propaedeutic to science, logic, or mathematics, with emphasis on the way they clarify common notions or make convenient abbreviations. One is likely to think, then, that definitions have the same function in ethics, and that the selection of any defined sense... will be guided by purely descriptive interests. In point of fact, this is rarely the case; description is usually a secondary consideration. Ethical definitions involve a wedding of descriptive and emotive meaning, and accordingly have a frequent use in redirecting and intensifying attitudes. To choose a definition is to plead a cause, so long as the word defined is strongly emotive.... Thus the disagreements evinced by contrary predications of the ethical term may also be evinced by contrary contentions about their meaning.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear from what has been said earlier, and in any case obvious enough, that criteria are invoked in order to justify assertions about particular works of art. A critical statement about a work of art is intended to describe the work's features in terms of value. Such a statement presupposes criteria of value. It is only by virtue of having a general conception of what is valuable in works of art of a certain kind that a critic is able to make assertions about a particular work of the sort that are relevant to communicating his evaluation of it. Criteria of value constitute the grounds of a critic's aesthetic evaluations; they are the generalizations regarding the features that belong to works of a certain kind and of a certain value to which he is willing to commit himself. That such generalizations can be supported by purely objective argument and on grounds independent of the circumstance that the features in question are found to belong to works that the critic does value was shown by reference to Aristotle (p. 303) and Johnson (pp. 306-



307), and will be further argued later in the chapter (pp.334-355). If critical argument consisted solely of remarks about the features of works of art without criteria being asserted or implied, it would not only be impossible for critical disagreements to be resolved but also impossible even to understand the reason for them.

But in fact critical disagreements can often be explained in terms of conflicting criteria of value. In recounting one of the first controversies between critic and composer in musical history, Max Graf discusses the criteria of value that underlay Johann Adolph Scheibe's evaluation of the music of J. S. Bach.<sup>47</sup> According to Graf, Scheibe had been impressed by the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment, particularly by the current, rationalistic aesthetic views of Eighteenth Century France which valued naturalness, reasonableness, clarity, and simplicity in music. Subscribing to the Encyclopaedists' disparagement of Italian opera, Scheibe argued against including the characteristic features of Baroque music among the defining characteristics of valuable music. And, of course, he described these features in terms intended to justify their exclusion: 'laboured', 'bombastic', 'over-elaborate'. For Scheibe the ostensive field of valuable music was drawn from the then new classicism of the Eighteenth Century, and his description of it set forth the defining characteristics which constituted his criteria of value.

Using his descriptive definition of this work as the criterion of what is valuable in music, Scheibe wrote of Bach:



The gentleman is the most distinguished of musicians. He is an extraordinary artist on clavier and organ.... I have heard him play on several occasions. One is astonished at his craftsmanship. One wonders how it is possible for him to move his fingers and feet so rapidly without entangling them, or how he can stretch them to make the widest leaps without producing one false tone and without distorting his body with such vehement movements.

This great man would be admired by the whole nation, had he more agreeableness and did he not keep naturalness away from his compositions by employing bombastic and intricate devices and darkening beauty with over-elaborate art. He judges the difficulties of his music according to his fingers. His compositions, therefore, are difficult to perform, as he demands that singers and instrumentalists perform with their throats and instruments the same feats he can perform on the clavier. This, of course, is impossible. All the ornaments, all the little grace notes, and all that are known as agréments are written out in full. Therefore his compositions are deprived of beauty, of harmony, and of clarity of melody, since the song is unrecognizable. All voices must work with each other, all with the same weight, so that it is impossible to recognize the principal voice. In short, Bach is to music what Lohenstein is to poetry. Their inclination toward bombast led them both from naturalness to artificiality, from sublimity to want of clearness. With both one admires the laborious effort and the exceptional work expended in vain because they are not conformable to reason.<sup>48</sup>

Graf disagrees with this criticism: "But the truth about Scheibe is that he was wrong, totally wrong, when he found Bach's music labored, intricate, and over-elaborate."<sup>49</sup> He explains his predecessor's error in judgement in terms of the inappropriateness of the criteria used: "He weighed Bach's music in the scales of contemporary French rationalism and found the music too heavy, too full of religious mysticism and polyphonic thoughtfulness, too massive in construction, and too passionate."<sup>50</sup> Graf does not deny that the features which Scheibe valued may

characterize valuable music, but he wishes to include others, those belonging to Baroque music, in the descriptive definition of valuable music. The resultant criteria support his judgement of Bach and his argument against Scheibe by showing that the unfavourable judgement was based upon a misunderstanding of Bach's work:

But Scheibe had to be wrong, for he was the representative of an epoch that preferred clarity to exuberant fancy. He could not understand the floridity of Bach's music. He would have been insincere had he pretended to comprehend Baroque opulence and emotion.<sup>51</sup>

But he failed because he judged Bach from a point of view that did not fit Bach at all. It did not make the least particle of sense to miss qualities in Bach's music which Bach had never intended to put there. Bach did not want to write music according to contemporary taste. He was essentially a man of the Baroque epoch, and he wrote his music in the Baroque style. It was his misfortune that the Baroque style had gone out of fashion with the rise of the Age of Reason.<sup>52</sup>

An even more manifest example of the use of criteria for reversing critical judgements is provided by Mark Twain.<sup>53</sup> He begins an essay on Fenimore Cooper's novels by quoting the evaluations of three critics. He refutes these judgements by showing that The Pathfinder and The Deerslayer do not have the features claimed for them by the critics but rather their contraries. In other words, he shows that the statements of high descriptive power which can be asserted about the works on the basis of a careful examination of them are incompatible with the statements of high evaluative power asserted by the critics. He does this by reference to a set of criteria of value applicable to romantic fiction. This set of criteria consists

of a series of statements asserting what features a work of romantic fiction must have in order to qualify as literary art. There is not space enough to quote as much of this instructive and amusing essay as I would like, but the following excerpts clearly illustrate the function of criteria in critical argument:

"The Pathfinder and The Deerslayer stand at the head of Cooper's novels as artistic creations. There are others of his works that contain parts as perfect as are to be found in these, and scenes even more thrilling. Not one can be compared with either of them as a finished whole.

The defects in both of these tales are comparatively slight. They were pure works of art." - Professor Lounsbury.

"The five tales reveal an extraordinary fullness of invention ... One of the very greatest characters in fiction, Natty Bumppo....

The craft of the woodsman, the tricks of the trapper, all the delicate art of the forest, were familiar to Cooper from his youth up." - Professor Brander Mathews.

"Cooper is the greatest artist in the domain of romantic fiction yet produced by America." - Wilkie Collins.

It seems to me that it was far from right for the Professor of English Literature in Yale, the Professor of English Literature in Columbia, and Wilkie Collins to deliver opinions on Cooper's literature without having read some of it. It would have been much more decorous to keep silent and let persons talk who have read Cooper.

Cooper's art has some defects. In one place in Deerslayer, and in the restricted space of two thirds of a page, Cooper has scored 114 offenses against literary art out of a possible 115. It breaks the record.

There are nineteen rules governing literary art in the domain of romantic fiction - some say twenty-two. In Deerslayer Cooper violated eighteen of them. These eighteen require:<sup>54</sup>

.... 7. They require that when a personage talks like an illustrated, gilt-edged, tree-calf, hand-tooled, seven-dollar Friendship's offering in the

beginning of a paragraph, he shall not talk like a negro minstrel in the end of it. But this rule is flung down and danced upon in the Deerslayer tale.

8. They require that crass stupidities shall not be played upon the reader as "the craft of the woodsman, the delicate art of the forest," by either the author or the people in the tale. But this rule is persistently violated in the Deerslayer tale.

9. They require that the personages of a tale shall confine themselves to possibilities and let miracles alone; or, if they venture a miracle, the author must so plausibly set it forth as to make it look possible and reasonable. But these rules are not respected in the Deerslayer tale.<sup>55</sup>

.... 13 Use the right word, not its second cousin.<sup>56</sup>

Having formulated the eighteen rules, Mark Twain moves to a critical description of Cooper's work, showing by reference to specific features that the rules are violated. Parts of the analysis relevant to the four criteria cited above are quoted in corresponding order:

The conversations in the Cooper books have a curious sound in our modern ears. To believe that such talk really came out of people's mouths would be to believe that there was a time when time was of no value to a person who thought he had something to say; when it was the custom to spread a two-minute remark out to ten; when a man's mouth was a rolling-mill, and busied itself all day long in turning four-foot pigs of thought into thirty-foot bars of railroad iron by attenuation; when subjects were seldom faithfully stuck to, but the talk wandered all around and arrived nowhere; when conversations consisted mainly of irrelevancies, with here and there a relevancy, a relevancy with an embarrassed look, as not being able to explain how it got there.

Cooper was certainly not a master in the construction of dialogue. Inaccurate observation defeated him here as it defeated him in so many other enterprises of his. He even failed to notice that the man who talks corrupt English six days in the week must and will talk it on the seventh, and can't help himself. In the Deerslayer story he lets Deerslayer talk the showiest kind of book-talk



sometimes, and at other times the basest of base dialects. For instance, when someone asks him if he has a sweetheart, and if so, where she abides, this is his majestic answer:

"She's in the forest - hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain - in the dew on the open grass - the clouds that float about in the blue heavens - the birds that sing in the woods - the sweet springs where I slake my thirst - and in all the other glorious gifts that come from God's Providence!"

And he preceded that, a little before, with this:

"It consarns me as all things that touches a fri'nd consarns a fri'nd."

And this is another of his remarks:

"If I was Injin born, now, I might tell of this, or carry in the scalp and boast of the expl'ite afore the whole tribe; or if my inimy had only been a bear" - and so on....<sup>57</sup>

If Cooper had been an observer his inventive faculty would have worked better; not more interestingly, but more rationally, more plausibly. Cooper's proudest creations in the way of "situations" suffer noticeably from the absence of the observer's protecting gift. Cooper's eye was splendidly inaccurate. Cooper seldom saw anything correctly. He saw nearly all things as through a glass eye, darkly. Of course a man who cannot see the commonest little every-day matters accurately is working at a disadvantage when he is constructing a "situation." In the Deerslayer tale Cooper has a stream which is fifty feet wide where it flows out of a lake; it presently narrows to twenty as it meanders along for no given reason, and yet when a stream acts like that it ought to be required to explain itself. Fourteen pages later the width of the brook's outlet from the lake has suddenly shrunk thirty feet, and become "the narrowest part of the stream." This shrinkage is not accounted for. The stream has bends in it, a sure indication that it has alluvial banks and cuts them; yet these bends are only thirty and fifty feet long. If Cooper had been a nice and punctilious observer he would have noticed that the bends were oftener nine hundred feet long than short of it....<sup>58</sup>

The reader will find some examples of Cooper's high talent for inaccurate observation in the account of the shooting-match in The Pathfinder.....

The nail was lightly driven, its head painted, and game called. Then the Cooper miracles began. The bullet of the first marksman chipped an edge of the nail-head; the next man's bullet drove the nail a

little way into the target - and removed all the paint. Haven't the miracles gone far enough now? Not to suit Cooper; for the purpose of this whole scheme is to show off his prodigy...before the ladies.

"The rifle cracked, the bullet sped its way, and the head of the nail was buried in the wood, covered by the pieces of flattened lead."

The recorded feat is certainly surprising just as it stands; but it is not surprising enough for Cooper. Cooper adds a touch. He has made Pathfinder do this miracle with another man's rifle; and not only that, but Pathfinder did not even have the advantage of loading it himself....

Pathfinder showed off handsomely that day before the ladies....

"It's a dead miss," said Major Lundie. Pathfinder waited an impressive moment or two, then said, in that calm, indifferent, know-it-all way of his, "No Major, he has covered Jasper's bullet, as will be seen if anyone will take the trouble to examine the target."

Wasn't it remarkable! How could he see that little pellet fly through the air and enter that distant bullet-hole? Yet that is what he did; for nothing is impossible to a Cooper person. Did any of those people have any deep-seated doubts about this thing? No; for that would imply sanity, and these were all Cooper people.<sup>59</sup>

Cooper's word-sense was singularly dull. When a person has a poor ear for music he will flat and sharp right along without knowing it. He keeps near the tune, but it is not the tune. When a person has a poor ear for words, the result is a literary flattening and sharpening; you perceive what he is intending to say, but you also perceive that he doesn't say it. This is Cooper. He was not a word-musician. His ear was satisfied with the approximate word. I will furnish some circumstantial evidence in support of this charge. My instances are gathered from half-a-dozen pages of the tale called Deerslayer. He uses verbal, for oral; precision, for facility; phenomena, for marvels; necessary, for predetermined; unsophisticated, for primitive; preparation, for expectancy; rebuked, for subdued; dependent on, for resulting from; fact, for condition; meretricious, for factitious; materially, for considerably; decreasing, for deepening; increasing, for disappearing; embedded, for enclosed; treacherous, for hostile; stood, for stooped; softened, for replaced; rejoined, for remarked; situation, for condition; different, for differing; insensible, for insentient; brevity, for



celerity; distrusted, for suspicious; mental imbecility, for imbecility; eyes, for sight; counteracting, for opposing; funeral obsequies, for obsequies.<sup>60</sup>

Mark Twain concludes his argument with a critical evaluation of The Deerslayer inferable from his critical description of it and contrary to the evaluations he quoted from the three other critics:

I may be mistaken, but it does seem to me that Deerslayer is not a work of art in any sense; it does seem to me that it is destitute of every detail that goes to the making of a work of art; in truth, it seems to me that Deerslayer is just simply a literary delirium tremens.<sup>61</sup>

It may have been noticed that Mark Twain refers to his statements of criteria as "rules governing literary art in the domain of romantic fiction," and formulates them as requirements. This way of speaking of criteria - it was Horace's way also, and that of many other critics since his time - may seem to lend support to prescriptive theories of the value judgement. But it must be remembered that even if by making general assertions about what features works of a certain kind should have, a critic is in some sense prescribing to artists, it does not follow that when he uses these same assertions as the grounds of his critical judgement he is also prescribing to his readers. Although rendering statements of criteria as descriptive definitions may involve altering their grammatical form, it does not involve transforming their logical character, but only makes this more apparent by manifesting the procedure by which they are derived. Taking statements of criteria such as those formulated by Mark Twain literally as prescriptions tends to

suggest that they have an arbitrary, a priori character in that they assert the writer's personal preference for artistic features of a certain kind. But in fact statements of criteria are intended to assert what features critical observation has discovered to belong to works of a certain kind generally accepted as having a certain value. This is the justification for reading Mark Twain's "rules" as descriptive definition, as a generalized description of the defining characteristics of valuable works of the kind under review.

It is not only terms of such vast generality, terms such as 'poetry', 'tragedy', and 'contemporary architecture' which refer to entire classes of works of art, that are descriptively defined in critical writing. More specific terms, denoting features common to works of certain kinds, are treated in the same way. Critics use terms like 'lyrical', 'dramatic', and 'rhythmic', to refer to certain features that can be distinguished by critical analysis from others. These terms, representing concepts of varying degrees of generality, serve to designate particular kinds of features, however much any one of these kinds of features may differ from one work to another. When such a term is applied to a work of art the double claim is made, implicitly or explicitly, that the work has certain features that can be specified in other terms and that the work is in some particular way valuable (or the contrary) by virtue of having these features. The 'other terms' constitute the meaning of the predicate. By defining it, or, alternatively, by providing a generalized description of the feature in

question, they provide a criterion for the application of the predicate in any particular instance.

One does not have to look far in the literature to find evidence of this logical procedure underlying the ascription of critical predicates. Dissenting from earlier judgements of Debussy's music, Neville Cardus observes that "In Debussy's period to be lyrical meant that a composer was obliged to vaunt his melody, all arching to an apex of high notes, with an appoggiatura - if there should be time for one - to squeeze out the last juices."<sup>62</sup> Cardus admits the absence of lyricism, thus defined, from Debussy's Pelléas, but revises the descriptive definition of this feature in order to justify the predication 'lyrical' of this opera.<sup>63</sup> To clarify and defend his partial description of lyrical music by contrast, Cardus cites an instance of what he would exclude from the ostensive definition of 'lyrical music': "a stretch of recitative from an opera by Massenet."<sup>64</sup> He deals with the term 'dramatic' in quite the same way, first saying what the term "meant" to music critics contemporary with Debussy by stating what musical features belonged to works which they called 'dramatic'. He revises this descriptive definition also, citing features of Pelléas that warrant the appellation 'dramatic'.<sup>65</sup> His treatment of the term 'rhythm' is formally the same, and one statement expressly acknowledges the use of a definition as a criterion: "I cannot imagine that any musician of today will quote the old rigid definitions of rhythm to prove that Debussy was weak in rhythm."<sup>66</sup> The implicit objection here is not

against his predecessors' having used a definition as a criterion but rather against the nature of the definition that they did use. He suggests that later critics revised the old "rigid" definition of rhythm in order to take account of innovations in respect to this feature of music. The passage in which the above statement occurs illustrates how developments within an art require the revision of the descriptive definitions which provide criteria for critical judgements:

In Debussy's period, rhythm meant emphasis, a succession of balanced bar-phrases. We need not at this time of day interrupt our argument to point out the presence in Debussy's music of rhythm; the development of music since the late-nineties has concentrated much on the subtilization of rhythm and the liberating of melody and harmony from the tight-pinching boots of pointed emphasis. I cannot imagine that any musician of to-day will quote the old rigid definitions of rhythm to prove that Debussy was weak in rhythm. Yet without implying that Debussy's pulse is even weak, we can agree that because of Debussy's preoccupation with harmonic problems the movement of his music tended to proceed in flowing lengths not sharply or abruptly changed; Wagner, when he was similarly preoccupied with the harmonic discoveries and revelations in 'Lohengrin', composed nearly the whole work in four-four time. It is difficult for a composer to be simultaneously flexible of rhythm and rich and subtle in harmonic mutation. Rhythm in Debussy is less a melodic than harmonic constituent.<sup>67</sup>

Cardus's criteria of musical value warrant the predication of 'lyrical', 'rhythmic', and 'dramatic' of Debussy's music. They do so because his descriptive definition of these terms is such that they can be appropriately applied to Debussy's work. By virtue of the historically established evaluative implications of these terms, Cardus's favourable judgement of Debussy can be inferred from his critical description of the music.

The example raises a difficulty. If the revision of criteria is accepted as a legitimate part of critical procedure, then it may seem that any critical judgement whatsoever can be justified. The critic need only descriptively re-define certain crucial terms to make them fit the work under review. According to this new standard (new definition) terms with old established and generally accepted evaluative implications can be applied to the work. The critic's reasons for assigning the terms may be different from the usual reasons - in other words, the features denoted by the terms may differ in important ways from features usually so denoted - , and yet the terms will bear the conventional evaluative connotations. Thus the inferred critical judgement of the work rests upon the arbitrary foundation of the critic's interference with the denotative meaning of terms.

The possibility of capricious judgements and dogmatic arguments of this kind may be admitted. But reputable criticism suffers from no such congenital defect. The changes which criteria of value undergo are a consequence of artistic innovation. If artistic production ceased, then criteria of value might in time become stabilized. New techniques in the creation of works of art require modification of the critical generalizations made about aesthetic value. What seems to happen, as the discussion of Johnson's Shakespeare criticism suggests, is that new works appear which differ in important respects from the body of works from which the criteria in use have been derived. These new works satisfy the old set of criteria to a



sufficient degree (or satisfy it in a sufficient number of respects) that at least some critics are prepared to assign them the value accorded to the earlier works. But if they are to apply the same terms of high evaluative power to the new works as to the old, then some adjustment must be made in the criteria upon which the assignment of critical terms is grounded. The adjustment takes the form of modifying the criteria to admit these new departures in style and technique as constituents of value. Cardus's treatment of the term 'rhythm' is an example.

Revisions of criteria, then, are forced upon a critic by developments within whatever field of art he happens to be engaged in criticizing. It would be misleading, therefore, to say that whenever expedient critics simply revise criteria in order to justify their critical judgements. For this suggests that criteria are a mere convenience, unrestrictedly flexible, subject to every critic's whim. But this is not so; for a critic must justify the alterations he makes in established criteria, giving reasons for making the changes necessary to accommodate whatever new work is in question. It is this requirement which prevents the critical revision of criteria from admitting any and every critical judgement as equally justified. The question of how revisions of criteria are justified is part of the more general question of how criteria themselves are justified, and this is a topic in need of immediate attention.

It has already been shown that works of art provide the sanction for criteria of value. The terms in which criteria of value must be formulated are the general terms of evaluative



force which critics use to refer to groups of works of generally recognized value. At one level of argument, then, a criterion of value is justified by the circumstance that the features which it ascribes to any work of a certain kind and a certain value are just those features which belong to works of that kind generally accepted as having the specified value. But this level of argument is not very deep. Not only is it circular (inevitably so), but it leaves the original judgement upon which all the others depend undefended. Also, many critical predicates, being general terms, are imprecise in their denotations, and so they can be used to refer to various works which in many respects are very different from one another. As a precaution against making any and every work eligible for a term of evaluative force, the critic tries to determine what conditions must prevail in order to justify its use in a particular instance. He often does this by an analysis of undisputed works which is designed to show how the valued aesthetic effects were achieved. The product of such an analysis is an interpretation of works of art made to account for the value they are judged to have and embodying the reasons for accepting the criteria which have been derived from a critical study of these works.

The reasons are various in kind and make different kinds of claims to acceptance. Most of the criteria for romantic fiction formulated by Mark Twain are self-evident: the features that he attributes to valuable work in this field are so obviously requisite to artistic success that no responsible critic

would dispute them. But criteria do not often make such a prima facie claim to acceptance. Aristotle must occasionally state why, according to some more general principle, a certain feature of dramatic art is to be valued. Cardus must raise historical and technical issues of lyricism, rhythm, and drama in order to establish the criteria which warrant his judgement of Debussy's music as possessing these features. A fully developed argument for Scheibe's neo-classic criteria of musical value would involve consideration of complex aesthetic and more general philosophic issues. However, it is not necessary to enumerate, classify, and analyse all the various forms of argument that are offered in support of criteria. All that is required here is to show that reasons of an objective kind are sometimes provided to support them. And that is not difficult to do.

Roger Fry's Last Lectures<sup>68</sup> exemplify the kind of argument that is advanced in support of criteria. In his attempt to survey the history of visual art by the light of his own aesthetic theory, Fry consistently uses a comparative method. His comparisons, both of the dominant styles of different periods and of particular works of art, are made with reference to two criteria. These criteria are concerned with the aesthetic qualities of sensibility and vitality. They are defined in two introductory chapters and then used in the critical analysis of nearly three hundred and fifty works of art. His exposition of these aesthetic qualities as criteria and his subsequent use of them are most illuminating in their bearing upon the problem

of critical justification.

"The important thing," says Fry, speaking of his method, "is to make sure that we are talking about the same thing and to this end I propose to narrow down our inquiry by isolating particular qualities in various works of art and comparing them with one another solely in regard to one or two qualities at a time."<sup>69</sup> The first quality that Fry considers is sensibility. Fry uses the term 'sensibility' to denote a certain quality in the execution of a work of art; and this quality, in the most general terms, is just whatever expresses the individuality of the artist, distinguishing his work from the mechanically exact, impersonal, rigidly uniform productions of the craftsman and the scientist. Two poets, for instance, may use the same verse form, the same metre, and these impose a formal structure on their poems; but just as the composer is forever straying from the home key and returning to it, so in their rhythmic modulations the poets depart from and return to the same basic metrical pattern. Such variations are altogether idiosyncratic, expressing the sensibilities of their authors, and they are of great interest to spectators of works of art. The vagaries of a geometer's drawings, on the other hand, are of no interest to the student of mathematics per se; however wildly drawn, the geometer's circles and right angled triangles will be conceived from a mathematical point of view as representing perfect circles and perfect right angled triangles. Similarly, we do not value a piston ring nor a carburetor because the machinist has expressed his sensibility by introducing

variations from the prototype. We are not interested in the geometer's nor in the machinist's sensibility, but we are, Fry believes, interested in the artist's sensibility. For 'sensibility', it would seem, denotes the results of that sensitivity to his material which allows the artist to vary his arrangement of it without altogether deserting his chosen form, thereby satisfying the mind's ambivalent craving for order and variety.

Further consideration of the psychological grounds of Fry's view that the evidence of sensibility in a work is aesthetically valuable may be deferred until it has been shown how he uses this concept in the critical analysis and comparison of works of art. Using sensibility as the criterion, he compares a Greek vase with a Chinese bronze:

There is in the design of the Greek vase a clear articulation of the parts; a bare spreading base, a narrow support, and clearly defined body, neck and evaded lip, each a separate curve of great geometrical regularity and simplicity. It is impossible to contemplate these curves for any length of time because they are immediately comprehended.

The Chinese bronze contains the same ideas - base and urn, plus a lid which is also clearly felt - but though the parts are distinct they are not isolated from each other. The base spreads, but far less markedly, and it requires no separate system of curvature. Though it does not melt into the urn it is not violently separated from it. In the urn there is the idea of a bowl; and note how satisfactory its volume is. Here too there is a cylindrical body and evaded lip but they are comprised in a single flowing curve; and throughout the nature of the curves is vital - they vary and grow out of each other and are never purely geometrical.

In the texture the difference is of the same nature. In the Greek vase everything is done to deny sensibility. Though the pattern is elaborate the execution is everywhere as near to mechanical precision

as possible. All the sensibility of the artist has been smoothed out, the texture has become uniform, the design mathematical. The vase has all the marks of an object of luxury, which perhaps accounts for the widespread appreciation of this type in the ancient world. Though the main ideas of form in the Chinese urn are far simpler, underneath the strong control of the design we feel everywhere the play of vital forces suggesting infinite variations.<sup>70</sup>

The logic of this criticism is admirably plain. Fry has selected one quality, sensibility, and defined it sufficiently well that its presence, as defined, can be detected in a work of art. He then critically describes two works of art, showing whether and to what extent this quality is present in the two works. Since sensibility, functioning here as the criterion, is an aesthetic quality prized by Fry, the predominance of this quality in the bronze over that in the Greek vase accounts for his implied preference for the Chinese work. And it is by reference to this criterion that his implicit evaluation of the bronze as of superior aesthetic value must be justified. The criterion provides the grounds for the transitions from statements of high descriptive power to those highly evaluative statements which leave no uncertainty about what critical judgement is to be inferred from them.

It should be noticed that Fry does not explicitly state that the Chinese bronze is a better work than the Greek vase. He has already contended that any such final and absolute judgement involves an insuperable difficulty:

Now do not think that I am naive enough to suppose that I can in this way, by taking one quality or aspect of a work of art after another and then by adding up our judgements on each, arrive at an objective valuation of the



work as a whole, because, first of all, who is to decide what sum of qualities makes up the work of art - still more, who is to decide what relative value is to be attached to one quality rather than another?<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear which work is, in Fry's judgement, the more valuable one. And the total absence of the quality of sensibility from an elaborately mounted scent bottle from Tutankhamen's tomb accounts for his disparagement of it:

In this Egyptian example taken from Tutankhamen's tomb we reach the high-water mark of the luxury effect. It outdoes Bond Street and Rue de la Paix. The craftsman has achieved the tightest mechanical uniformity and exactitude; the artist has been completely suppressed.<sup>72</sup>

Anyone aware of Fry's criterion could confidently infer that he judges the scent bottle to have little or no aesthetic value. This evaluation, so clearly implied, is not explicitly asserted. Fry's reticence may be attributed to his view that there is no "objective standard of aesthetic value."<sup>73</sup>

But surely his standard of aesthetic value (the criterion of sensibility) is in every respect perfectly objective. 'Sensibility', in Fry's sense, characterizes not the critic's experience but the work of art; and Fry is able to show by reference to a work's features whether and in what way the work exhibits evidence of sensibility. The reasons he gives for making sensibility a condition of aesthetic value are also perfectly objective. They are provided by a psychological theory of aesthetic experience which, whether or not it is accepted, is as objective as it is possible for a theory to be.

The theory, adumbrated in his lecture on sensibility, is



intended to explain the intellectual pleasure taken in art. Noting that the human mind finds satisfaction both in uniformity, order, in the recognition of mathematically regular arrangements of parts, like those of the crystal, in repetitive sequences that can be explained by causal laws and also, on the other hand, in the unique, the exceptional, in variety, the unexpected and the fortuitous, Fry proposes that the mind takes pleasure in art because it finds there within a formal structure infinite variations. This is a version of the venerable notion of art as comprising unity and variety, of course; nevertheless, Fry's rendering of the old view is original. "What we call the intellect," he says, "finds satisfaction most definitely in the recognition of a causal sequence. When we ask why - let us say, why does the moon change its shape? - we are in a state of unrest or perplexity. When an astronomer explains to us the causes of this, that unrest disappears, the mind is at rest on the question, and I think we all agree that the moment at which we grasp clearly for the first time any such causal sequence we have a definitely pleasurable emotion."<sup>74</sup>

Now in contemplating a work of art, we are continually asking why and, if the artist is one with whom we can communicate, we are continually getting answers, and this repeated recognition of the causes of the picture being as it is gives us a succession of moments of pleasure as the mind passes from unrest to rest and satisfaction. Herein lies one of the causes of the richness of art as a source of pleasure. We cannot repeat the pleasure due to a causal explanation of a fact or a mathematical problem because we cannot repeat the passage from mental unrest to rest. As regards that particular question our mind is permanently at rest. But works of art prolong this

process almost indefinitely.<sup>75</sup>

The thesis is, of course, debatable. Even if Fry's apparently hedonistic presuppositions about aesthetic value were granted, his explanation of how works of art provide pleasure might be contested. But his argument is thoroughly objective, and it provides a conception of criticism as being as objective as any intellectual activity can be. It holds the essence of critical activity to be this 'asking why'. By answering such 'why' questions - why this figure is placed on the canvas just here and left in shadow, why a discord in brass just at this moment cuts across the melody of the violins, why the novelist chose this particular scene for these events to be enacted - the critic satisfies himself about the formal aesthetic justification of the elements which compose the work of art. It is from such analyses that critics take their intellectual pleasure in art and from which they derive their judgements.

Fry's denial of the objectivity of his own critical judgements and of the criteria upon which they are grounded is odd:

[T]he value of my method [of "isolating particular qualities in various works of art and comparing them with one another solely in regard to one or two qualities at a time"] is to stop that immediate like or dislike response to the work of art as a whole which as we have seen is just as likely to be due to imperfections in our receiving set as to anything in the work of art itself. It is possible, I think, by some such methods to circumvent our native prejudice and predilections and to acquire a more alert passivity in our attitude. And it is by cultivating such an attitude that we can best, I think, increase the delicacy and sensibility of our

reception of the messages of the present artists. It is the fulness, richness and significance of our feelings in the face of works of art that matters - the judgements we draw from them are only of value in so far as they may indicate to others the possibilities of experiencing similar emotions. Whatever we do we shall not attain a standard of objective validity.<sup>76</sup>

In order to account for this disparagement of a perfectly reputable standard, it must be supposed that by "a standard of objective validity" Fry means a standard that is universal, absolute, totally competent, yielding authoritative judgements from which there can be no appeal. But of course a criterion need not be universal and absolute in order to be objective. So far as I am aware, no universal and absolute standard of artistic perfection that is of any use to practising critics has ever been formulated, and the arguments offered in defense of the possibility of formulating one seem to me unconvincing.<sup>77</sup> An objective standard or criterion of artistic perfection need make no pretension to universality or absoluteness; the objectivity of a criterion depends upon the kind of reasons offered in support of it. And the reasons that Fry offers for sensibility as a criterion of aesthetic value are of a kind that guarantee its objectivity.

A criterion of value does not guarantee a final and irrevocable judgement of the relative value of the works considered. But this does not imply the logical inadequacy of criteria. Only misunderstanding their function in critical argument could lead anyone to suppose that it does. As was mentioned earlier, a criterion serves, in a manner analogous to an hypothesis used

in scientific investigation, to control the perceptions of the critic. With a criterion in mind, the critic is aware of what he is looking for, and the reader is able to understand the point (the exact reference and evaluative implication) of critical remarks. Secondly, the reader who does not concur in the critic's judgements may often discover the ground of disagreement in the diversity of criteria upon which the conflicting judgements are based. Equally important, through consideration of criteria the reader may be made aware of aesthetic qualities which he had not before realized were constituents of aesthetic value. Such awareness, probably, underlies many changes of taste.

Between blind disagreement and a reasoned difference of opinion there is a distinction of importance. It is logically unimportant that reading a piece of criticism may not yield perfect agreement in judgement between critic and reader. But it is logically important that the reader be able to understand the critic's reasons for his judgement. It follows from the distinction between empirical observation and critical observation so strongly insisted upon here that the understanding of critical statements does not depend upon perceiving their correspondence with a work's physical features. The features of works of art that are talked about in critical discourse are not perceived independently of acts of aesthetic judgement. The statements made about these features cannot be fully understood by a reader who is ignorant of the criteria of value which underlie them. A critical statement can be fully

understood only when the reasons for making it are understood. An explicit criterion such as Fry's 'sensibility' helps to supply this understanding. Whatever importance a reader may attach to a particular criterion, and whether or not he thinks its application in a particular case is successful, he can at least learn by reference to it why the critic submits a certain comparative judgement. And this, rather than that critical statements should be unanimously accepted as asserting true judgements, is the mark of successful critical communication.

The case of Roger Fry indicates that the ultimate grounds of critical judgements are the aesthetic theories that may be advanced to support the criteria of value used in argument. Such theories comprise generalizations about the value of art or of one of its genres. They are intended to explain in the most general way possible why works of art are valuable. It is not often that such theories are included in a work of practical criticism. And it seems very likely that many critics never do formulate the theories of aesthetic value presupposed in their arguments. Nevertheless, it must be supposed that some general conception of aesthetic value, at least within a restricted field of art, underlies every critical judgement. And even if the critic is not himself very clearly aware of the theoretical principles upon which his judgements are grounded, it should be possible to discover these by an analysis of his arguments.

Expositions of aesthetic theory of the kind considered here and formulations of criteria both take the form of



generalizations about the value of art or of some form of it. Although the two modes of discourse are often amalgamated within a single piece of writing, they are nevertheless distinguishable in terms of purpose. Criteria of value consist of generalizations which set forth the features which determine the values of works of art. They derive, as I have tried to show, from critical studies of works which have impressed their audience as being aesthetically valuable. A set of criteria, when formulated, simply renders explicit the reasons that a critic has for applying certain terms to certain works of art and other terms to other works. A set of criteria partially justifies itself pragmatically by imposing consistency and intelligibility upon the arguments in which it is used. But still it makes sense to ask a critic what reasons he has for accepting certain criteria, and critics sometimes do feel obliged to justify them.

The aesthetic theories upon which critical judgements are grounded also consist of generalizations about the value of works of art. But their primary function is not to state in general terms what features belong to works having a specified value. That is the function of criteria. A theory of aesthetic value is intended to explain why works which have certain features - works which satisfy certain criteria - are valuable. Thus aesthetic theories underlie and support criteria of value by providing some reason for accepting a certain set of criteria other than that certain works accepted as valuable can be described in the same general terms as occur in the



formulation of the criteria.

F. L. Lucas's The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal<sup>78</sup> provides a satisfactory example of this assertion of criteria intermingled with supporting aesthetic theory which characterizes critical argument conducted at a high level of generality. Lucas is dissenting from current evaluations of a number of modern poems and attempting to justify his critical position by arguing against the literary criteria accepted by certain unnamed colleagues. His argument can be read as an attempt to define the class of good poetry and to describe evaluatively the features common to the works that occupy this class. He makes clear that he would exclude from this class a group of works admitted by other critics and also that his evaluative description of works that in his judgement belong there differs from that of these other critics. He laments the failure of contemporary critics to agree upon a set of criteria of poetic value, to subscribe to any set of conventions for the critical use of 'good' as applied to poems. His remarks, which clearly presuppose that criteria of poetic value are implicit in the critical use of terms of high evaluative power, imply some of his own criteria:

For Antiquity, in a word, "good" poetry meant noble poetry. For the Renaissance it meant learned poetry; the poetry of scholars, and of wits. For the eighteenth century it became the poetry of men - and women - of the world. For the Romantics, the poetry of generous rebels. They still had rules, if only to break them. But now - ! Twenty-three centuries after the Father of Criticism, Aristotle, is there a single law of literature, a single principle for writing poetry, a single canon for criticizing it, about which a

congress of our critics would agree? For it is no longer agreed that poetry should be beautiful, or noble, or civilized, or well constructed, or musical, or intelligent, or even intelligible.<sup>79</sup>

After discussing and comparing a variety of works, Lucas describes in general terms the works that he judges to belong in the highest rank:

Herrick, for instance, is not heroic; he is, on the contrary, a superb example of the pure artist; and yet how his work would drop to dust without the graceful gaiety, the humour, and the humanity of the man himself behind! It is not what writers preach that matters; it is what they themselves are. More and more decidedly, as against work that is tainted with mania or cruelty or barbarism, one comes back to the vital and the sane, to Greek poetry, to Chaucer or the Ballads, to Ronsard or Shakespeare, to Keats or Morris or Hardy. And in moments of doubt about the value of a book, I find myself referring it in imagination to a ghostly jury, not of professional critics, but of men and women of this world. To it are invited Horace and Montaigne; the woman's wit of Dorothy Osborne, the sensitive simplicity of Dorothy Wordsworth; the eighteenth century common sense of Horace Walpole and Madame Geoffrin; Landor with his stormy honesty and Hardy with his quiet irony.<sup>80</sup>

From these and from many more detailed descriptions of works taken as ostensibly defining 'great poetry' emerge his criteria of value, his statements of the features which are necessary to poetry of the highest order:

Yet there remain certain qualities that for three thousand years men have valued alike in life and in what they have agreed to call great literature - qualities which it has become second nature to most normal minds to find appealing, but which reason and experience also tell us we do well to like. Nobility, intensity, courage, generosity, pity - qualities like these cannot by themselves make a poem good, any more than they can make a face beautiful.... But in a poem, as in a face, no perfection of form in their absence can reach the highest beauty. And in a poem, as in a face, the presence of their

opposites - of vulgarity or morbidity or poltroonery or meanness or cruelty - is a flaw for which no perfection of form can atone.<sup>81</sup>

In order to support these criteria of value upon which he grounds his critical judgements, he explains why these features of poetry rather than others are most valuable. It is at this point that his discussion moves into the realm of aesthetic theory:

There are, I think, certain human qualities that we have learnt spontaneously to value, because life has proved them valuable. This instinctive admiration is like the instinctive pleasure we take in other wholesome things; but more disinterested, more aesthetic. Vitality, strength, courage, devotion, pity, grace - these move us, as directly as beauty moves us. But not, surely, without cause. When a woman loves a man's strength or courage, it is only because her dead ancestors, sitting in council within her, push her blindly with their ghostly hands towards what she will need, for herself and her children, in the warfare of the world. So with the instinctive appeal such qualities possess in general - it is no mere whimsy or matter of taste. We think courage a fine and poetic thing, for the excellent, if prosaic, reason that it has been for ages untold a highly important thing to have.<sup>82</sup>

Lucas's complete argument is, of course, more detailed, interesting, and persuasive than this brief resumé and series of fragmentary quotations. But this admittedly inadequate account should at least indicate how he builds up the descriptive definition of good poetry which constitutes his criteria of value for this art and also how he defends it by a generalized theory of aesthetic value which borrows support from ethical considerations. His argument is, I believe, assailable at several points. His set of criteria cannot be considered completely adequate for the appraisal of poetic value, for, as he concedes,

the qualities which he stipulates as being necessary to "the highest Beauty" are not in themselves sufficient to make a poem good. His comment on Herrick, that it is the "humanity of the man himself behind" the poetry which constitutes the value of the poems, is bewildering. What Lucas admires about Herrick must either manifest itself in the poetry or be discovered through a study of the poet's biography. A critic cannot base his aesthetic evaluations of poems upon evidence found outside the poems; if the features which Lucas attributes to good poetry are not discoverable in the poems themselves, then the poems cannot be judged to satisfy Lucas's own criteria. And if the requisite features are so discoverable in the poem, then consideration of "the fineness of the personality glimpsed between its lines," of "what the poets themselves are" is otiose, irrelevant, and misleading. Lucas says that "it is hard to say where exactly aesthetics ends and ethics begins,"<sup>83</sup> and certainly it is hard to say where consideration of aesthetic value ends and consideration of ethical value begins in Lucas's exposition of theory and criteria. Certainly F. R. Leavis, from whose critical evaluations published in New Bearings In English Poetry<sup>84</sup> Lucas is dissenting, would distinguish more sharply between the two realms of value than does Lucas. Leavis implies that the value of a poem depends (for one thing) upon the poet's finding a subject and style suitable for expressing the ethical problems which beset his own age. Lucas suggests that unless a poem embodies ethical views admirable in themselves it cannot reach the highest rank. In short,

Leavis's criteria of aesthetic value are more purely aesthetic, based upon a theory intended to explain artistic values as such. Moral considerations exert a great influence on Lucas's criteria of aesthetic value, for in his theory of poetics artistic excellence is not taken to be evaluable independently of a work's moral tone and effect. Arbitration of these conflicts of theory, criteria, and judgement does not lie within the rights and responsibilities of this thesis. The point of the discussion is to reveal the various levels of critical disagreement and to indicate their connections.

The question of the aesthetic theories assumed in critical practice has recently been discussed by Harold Osborne in a book unsympathetically treated earlier in the thesis.<sup>85</sup> Osborne distinguishes five such theories or "assumptions about the nature of beauty or artistic excellence,"<sup>86</sup> as he calls them, upon which most modern works of criticism are founded. He credits only one such theory, a formalist one which he terms "Configurational," with providing an objective standard of judgement which can be consistently applied in aesthetic evaluation.<sup>87</sup> He disparages the other four theories, the Realist, Emotional, Expressionist, and Transcendentalist, either because the standards that they provide are subjective or incapable of being consistently applied in practice.<sup>88</sup> Osborne's critique of theories need not detain us. What his book offers is acknowledgement of the objective grounding of critical evaluations in arguable theories as to what constitutes aesthetic value.



Osborne's statements about the basis of criteria are not altogether in accord with this thesis. But what he says is pertinent enough to quote:

We have seen that critics work with a number of different assumptions about the nature of beauty or artistic excellence and that their critical judgements and descriptions vary in accordance with the assumptions which they adopt. Some of these assumptions are more convenient and workable than others, but none of them is right or wrong in itself; for they are in the last resort merely definitions of linguistic usage. But until you know what assumptions about the nature of artistic excellence any critic is making, it is not possible to know what he means when he says that any work of art is good or not good. Nor is it possible to know whether disagreements among critics are real or apparent until you know what they mean when they advance judgements of good and bad about works of art.<sup>89</sup>

To say that the "assumptions" upon which critical judgements depend are neither right nor wrong may be misleading. The statement suggests that one set of assumptions about aesthetic value is ultimately no more justifiable than any other and that therefore no such set of assumptions is in any significant sense justifiable. But as Osborne's own book shows, sound reasons can be given for rejecting certain critical assumptions and for admitting others. When Osborne says that these assumptions "are in the last resort merely definitions of linguistic usage," he must be corrected by Stevenson's admonition that there is nothing 'mere' about it.<sup>90</sup> Critics must accept full responsibility for their aesthetic theories, principles, or assumptions which, through the criteria these sponsor, determine the use of crucial predicates. Questions about a critic's usage are, after all, inseparable from questions about



his judgement. To disagree with a critic's judgement is simply to disagree with the terms he applies to a work. In order to justify his usage in a particular context, the critic must be able to show not only that according to the criteria employed his critical terms are applicable but also that his criteria are themselves warranted. The responsible critic is not free merely to define his predicates; he must be able to justify his way of using them. His criteria of value must be defensible.

However, Osborne's view that understanding a critical judgement depends upon a knowledge of the criteria used seems to me correct. Criteria of value are implicit in critical statements. If a reader does not understand the implications of a critical statement, then he does not fully understand the meaning of that statement in its critically relevant sense. Identical sentences written by different critics are not necessarily equivalent in meaning. What each of them means by the statement he makes about a work of art (i.e., what features he imputes to it by predicating certain terms of it) may be discovered only by reference to the criteria which govern his use of terms. Acceptance of a critic's statements depends upon acceptance of his criteria of value. Critical statements are meaningful and justifiable only by reference to the criteria presupposed in their formulation. Further, criteria of value must themselves be justifiable on objective grounds if it is to be maintained that the judgements derived from them are objective and justifiable. The requisite grounds are ultimately

provided by aesthetic theory.

Most criteria of value are, I believe, initially derived from critical studies of works of art rather than deduced from aesthetic theories. However, it could probably be shown that aesthetic theory sometimes has an effect upon the set of criteria which it supports. A set of criteria may be elaborated and particularized, rendered more explicit, consistent, and restrictive on the basis of a highly articulated theory of aesthetic value within a given field. The neo-classic theory of poetry, the realist theory of fiction, the naturalistic theory of drama, the impressionist theory of painting, the expressionist theory of dancing, the functional theory of architecture are random examples of familiar theories which have led to the systematization of the criteria used at various times in critical evaluation. As a justifying factor in critical argument (the ultimate one), aesthetic theory is here considered in its principal role of providing objective grounds for criteria of value rather than in its subsidiary one of influencing the decision of individual critics or of schools of critics as to what these shall be. By supporting one set of criteria rather than others, an aesthetic theory can be instrumental in determining critical judgements. Thus the defense of a particular judgement by a critic who is pressed hard for justification may ultimately depend upon the soundness of the theoretical views about aesthetic value which underlie his argument. The claim that critical judgements can be objective, impersonal, informative, defensible, and justifiable

therefore ultimately depends upon the possibility of expositions of aesthetic theory having these characteristics. Such a theory may be based upon a dangerously narrow selection of works of art, or be defective in some other way, but it is corrigible. A theory of aesthetic value is after all a theory based upon a study of works of art, and works of art as data are logically prior to the theory. A wholly a priori theory of aesthetic value, and thus a completely dogmatic criticism, is impossible.

I think that it is correct to say that to suppose that aesthetic theories generate criteria of value would be to misconstrue their logical situation. Characteristically, an aesthetic theory is developed in order to justify criteria of value already in use, even though it may also at times encourage modification of accepted criteria. The logical importance of aesthetic theory is that it breaks the circle within which criteria for the judgement of works are derived from analyses of works which have already been evaluated. It does this by providing a theoretical justification for using certain criteria of value rather than others in critical appraisal. Such theories take the form of explaining the nature of aesthetic value, of showing upon what general conditions the value of a work of art depends, thus fulfilling the logical requirement that the reasons for the evaluations placed upon works of art must have objective grounds and be not constituted merely by the emotion, feeling, attitude, or personal preference of the critic.

It is true that aesthetic evaluations are involved in the

construction of aesthetic theories. The theorist must select from the multitudinous products claiming to be art certain works upon which to base his theory. Since such selection requires critical judgement, the procedure involves circularity, in so far as certain works judged to be valuable are taken as the datum of a theory upon which are grounded subsequent judgements. But the circle is not vicious. For the value of the works serving as the datum must be explicable in terms of the theory, and the exclusion of other works must be similarly accountable. Further, the theory is expected to provide some highly general reasons for the value certain works are judged to have other than that all of these works possess in common certain features describable in general terms of value.

This analysis of critical argument has now penetrated to the bed rock of aesthetic judgement. Further exploration would go beneath the level of criticism altogether into the region of aesthetic theory. The relations between aesthetic theory and critical practice raise interesting problems, but they are for the most part beyond the scope of this thesis. The questions concerning them which are relevant here are whether or not aesthetic theory can provide logical support for critical criteria, and whether or not any such theory can be objective. There is no room for doubt about the answers to these questions. When criteria of value are questioned they can be defended and in principle justified on the grounds of highly general conceptions of what constitutes artistic excellence in a given field. The discussion of Roger Fry's

criterion of sensibility provided an example of this procedure, and also showed that a highly general theory of aesthetic value can be perfectly objective. Similar examples could be found almost anywhere in critical literature where general principles of aesthetic value are formulated. And even where they are not so formulated, they could be elicited from a study of the work of any critic whose judgements are consistent with one another, that is to say, of any critic who does have some principles.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study in critical argument has been to show that the function of evaluative criticism is to provide expert information about the aesthetic value of works of art. It has been argued that since critics write about public objects, there is no inherent reason why the correctness of their statements cannot be ascertained. It has been shown that since critical predicates combine descriptive and evaluative power, it is possible to determine whether or not a critic's statements characterize a work appropriately and, therefore, whether or not his evaluation is to be accepted. It has been maintained that since critical argument is conducted according to certain logical rules, the infraction of which renders any such argument unacceptable, it is possible to distinguish critical arguments that are cogent from those that are not. Finally, it has been claimed that critical judgements are based upon criteria of value and aesthetic theory which can be defended on objective grounds, and that aesthetic evaluation, therefore, has a rational basis.

In order to establish these theses, it was required to show, in each case, that contrary views expounded by contemporary theorists were not in accord with the actualities of critical



practice. It was found that the purpose of critical statements, the identity of what they are about, the nature of their relationships to works of art, to one another, and to their grounds of justification were commonly misconstrued by philosophers. From the revised view of these matters presented here, it is concluded that aesthetic evaluation can be informative, reliable, corrigible, and objective.

In the writings of professional critics are to be found the records of reasoned argument about aesthetic value, of attempts to justify aesthetic evaluations of works of art. The neglect of this literature by those who have written on the subject of the aesthetic judgement is, to my mind, nothing short of a philosophical scandal. No one has the right to publish his findings on the nature of aesthetic evaluation who has not examined some of the evaluations written by competent critics. If I have convinced the reader that standard philosophical procedure in this respect has been illegitimate, dogmatic, and profitless, then I may bear his unfavourable reception of my other arguments with a measure of equanimity.

Theory of criticism can be advanced only by an intensive study of the best critical practice. What is required is a better understanding of the principles of argument inherent in the writings of reputable critics. What is to be achieved is a set of standards for appraising the competence of any piece of evaluative criticism. It is not a question of philosophers legislating to critics, of laying down a priori rules of procedure which critics are expected to obey. It is a question

of discovering the rules tacitly acknowledged by those who argue seriously and intelligently about the aesthetic value of works of art. It is a question of discovering those features which distinguish sound criticism from idle, baseless, irresponsible talk about works of art. In an age when the worst that has been thought and said in the world is highly esteemed by the majority of people, it would be well to show that there is philosophical justification for respecting the aesthetic evaluations made by men of culture and discernment.

## N O T E S

# Notes

## Introduction

Page	Note	
2	1	Rudolph Carnap, <u>Philosophy and Logical Syntax</u> , Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, London, 1935, p. 14. (See my Chapter 4, pp. 194-200.)
3	2	These, I believe, have been few in number. In <u>Aesthetics and Criticism</u> (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1955, pp. 16-19), Harold Osborne names only three against whom to direct his argument that a non-valuing criticism is "both impossible of execution and extravagantly ridiculous to contemplate." They are R. G. Moulton, Jules Lemaître and Lionello Venturi. (Professor Herbert Dingle is quoted in support of Moulton, p. 16, and it is pointed out, p. 17, that "Something akin to this non-evaluative criticism was attempted by Mr. Clive Bell in <u>Enjoying Pictures</u> (1934)...." Moulton stated the minority viewpoint forthrightly in 1885: "There is thus an inductive literary criticism, akin in spirit and methods to the other branches of criticism, such as the criticism of taste. This inductive criticism will entirely free itself from the judicial spirit and its comparisons of merit, which is found to have been leading criticism during half its history on to false tracks from which it has taken the other half to retrace its steps." ( <u>Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist</u> , quoted in Osborne, p. 16.) Lemaître is cited as representative of the impressionist school of criticism which, according to Osborne, pp. 16-17, holds "that the critic, first ridding his mind of all prejudices and arbitrary canons and rules, should make appreciative contact with the work of art before him; then, eschewing judgement and putting aside all temptation to praise or blame, he is to describe the impression made by the work of art on his own mind in untrammelled appreciation."
16	3	In <u>The Definition of Good</u> , Macmillan, New York, 1947 (see especially pp. 4-18), which states regarding ethical judgements objections to subjectivism very similar to those given here, A. C. Ewing observes, p. 9, that "We should note an ambiguity in the terms 'approval' and 'disapproval'. As used in recent philosophical

Page      Note

discussion they have commonly stood for emotions, but in ordinary speech they usually express a judgement. 'I approve of A' is then identical with 'I judge A good,' 'I disapprove of A' with 'I judge A bad' (in some respect at least). All ethical judgements express approval or disapproval in this sense, as all judgements without exception express the thoughts of the person who makes them. But if I therefore went on to say that I meant by 'A is good' that I approve of A, I should be saying that I meant by 'A is good' that I judge A is good. This as a definition is obviously circular."

## Chapter 1

Page	Note
23	1 P. H. Nowell-Smith, <u>Ethics</u> , Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1954, Ch. 1, pp. 11-22.
	2 <u>Ibid.</u> , Chs. 2, 3, 4, pp.23-60.
24	3 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.11.
	4 <u>Ibid.</u>
	5 <u>Ibid.</u>
	6 <u>Ibid.</u>
	7 <u>Ibid.</u>
30	8 A. J. Ayer, <u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , Gollancz, London, 1950, pp.113-114: "Such aesthetic words as 'beautiful' and 'hideous' are employed, as ethical words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response.... the purpose of aesthetic criticism is not so much to give knowledge as to communicate emotion. The critic, by calling attention to certain features of the work under review, and expressing his own feelings about them, endeavours to make us share his attitude towards the work as a whole."
	9 A. J. Ayer, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements," <u>Horizon</u> , September, 1949, p.175: "My own answer to this question is that what are accounted reasons for our [aesthetic] judgements are reasons only in the sense that they determine attitudes." P.176: "As for the [aesthetic] judgement itself, it may be regarded as expressing the attitude which the reasons given for it are calculated to invoke." (In the square brackets I have substituted 'aesthetic' for 'moral', an interpolation warranted by Ayer's claim in <u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.113, that "our conclusions about the nature of ethics apply to aesthetics also." In the article quoted, where the views of the earlier book are amended, this claim is not withdrawn; rather the following remark suggests that Ayer wishes to maintain it: "We can and do give reasons for our moral judgements, just as we do for our aesthetic judgements, where the same argument applies.")



Page	Note	
31	10	R. M. Hare, <u>The Language of Morals</u> , Oxford, 1952, p.127: "When we commend or condemn anything, it is always in order, at least indirectly, to guide choices, our own or other people's, now or in the future." P.129: "When we commend an object, our judgement is not solely about that particular object, but is inescapably about objects like it."
	11	F. R. Leavis, <u>The Great Tradition</u> , Chatto and Windus, London, 1950, p.227.
33	12	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.234. If this appears to be a 'descriptive' remark, asserting, with reasons, within which class of literary products the novel is to be included - a likely enough reading, for that matter - the reader may be reminded of the statement which immediately precedes it in the context: "He doesn't write 'poetic prose'; he writes with a poetic force of evocation, registering with the responsiveness of a genius of verbal expression what he so sharply sees and feels."
34	13	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.228.
	14	<u>Ibid.</u>
	15	<u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.113.
	16	Leavis, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.228.
	17	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.229-230.
	18	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.230.
35	19	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.235.
	20	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.234.
	21	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.244.
	22	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.245.
36	23	"On the Analysis of Moral Judgements," <u>op. cit.</u> , p.175. (In the square brackets "aesthetic" has again been substituted for "moral.")
	24	<u>Ibid.</u> and <u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.113.
39	25	Oxford, 1952.
40	26	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.114-119.

Page	Note	
40	27	To support his prescriptive principle, Hare cites the <u>Oxford English Dictionary's</u> definition of the word 'good': "Good... The most general adjective of commendation, implying the existence in a high, or at least satisfactory, degree of characteristic qualities which are either admirable in themselves, or useful for some purpose..." What Hare seems not to have noticed is that to commend is not to prescribe. On the authority of the same lexicographers, 'commend' means "To present as worthy of acceptance or regard; to direct attention to, as worthy of notice"; and 'prescribe' means "To write or lay down as a rule or direction to be followed; to appoint, ordain, direct, enjoin." According to the dictionary meanings of these words, therefore, words used to commend are not necessarily at the same time used to prescribe. This difference between their functions is illustrated by such statements as, 'Hannibal was a good leader', 'Man o'War ran well', 'Gielgud gave a great performance of Lear'. The general, the horse, and the actor are all being commended; but what is being prescribed, and to whom? Clearly, the view that all words of commendation are words of prescription is mistaken. It is unlikely that the logic of evaluative discourse will be clarified by a study which begins by introducing this verbal confusion.
	28	<u>The Language of Morals</u> , p.146.
41	29	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.132.
	30	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.127.
	31	<u>Ibid.</u>
	32	<u>Ibid.</u>
42	33	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.128.
	34	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.129.
	35	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.111.
	36	The claim that these statements are purely descriptive might be contested, considering their contexts, in consistency with the view expressed later in the thesis. But the relevant fact here is that Hare takes them to be descriptive statements. At this point I am not questioning the

Page	Note
	conventional distinction between descriptive statements and value statements. Rather I am pointing out that difference between technical or moral remarks and critical remarks which becomes apparent when the three corresponding types of discourse are all construed according to Hare's theory.
42	37 Leavis, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.236.
43	38 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.243.
	39 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.244.
45	40 <u>Op. cit.</u> , p.128.
46	41 <u>Philosophy and Logical Syntax</u> , Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, London, 1935, p.24.
	42 <u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.108.
47	43 <u>Ethics and Language</u> , Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944, p.21.
	44 "Ravel at Eighty," <u>The Observer</u> , London, March 13, 1955.
48	45 <u>Ibid.</u>
49	46 <u>Op. cit.</u> , p.227.
	47 <u>Ibid.</u>
	48 <u>Ibid.</u>
50	49 Hare, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.128.
	50 Leavis, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.227: "Yet, if I am right, of all Dickens's works it [Hard Times] is the one that has all the strength of his genius, together with a strength no other of them can show - that of a completely serious work of art."
52	51 "Logic and Appreciation," in <u>Aesthetics and Language</u> , ed. William Elton, Blackwell, Oxford, 1954, pp.168-169.
	52 <u>Op. cit.</u> , p.168.
53	53 Leavis, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.227.
54	54 <u>Ibid.</u>

Page	Note	
55	55	<u>Ibid.</u>
56	56	<u>Ibid.</u>
57	57	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.228.
	58	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.227
58	59	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.228.
	60	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.229.
59	61	<p>The reader may wonder how I am to account for certain statements said to be incompatible with the intention imputed to critics by prescriptive theorists. The statements were: "Criticism, of course, has its points to make against <u>Hard Times</u>" and "Again, his attitude to Trade Unionism is not the only expression of a lack of political understanding." (See p. 35 above.) The point was that if the critic's purpose was to inspire a feeling or attitude of admiration toward the book in his readers, he would avoid making statements that were likely to discourage such a feeling or attitude. But are these statements not also at variance with Leavis's attempt to show that the novel is a masterpiece? No; for it is not inconsistent with the claim that a work is a masterpiece to admit that it has some defects or weaknesses. Through claiming that <u>Hard Times</u> is a masterpiece Leavis is not committed to holding that it is perfect.</p>

## Chapter 2

Page	Note	
69	1	<u>Aesthetic As Science of Expression and General Linguistic</u> , translated by Douglas Ainslie, MacMillan, London, 1929, p.100. Cp. René Wellek, "The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art," <u>The Southern Review</u> , Vol. VII, 1941-42, p.736: "If we destroy the writing or even all copies of a printed book we still may not destroy the poem, as it might be preserved in oral tradition or in the memory of a man like Macaulay who boasted of knowing <u>Paradise Lost</u> and <u>Pilgrim's Progress</u> by heart. On the other hand, if we destroy a painting, or a piece of sculpture or a building, we destroy it completely, though we may preserve descriptions or records in another medium and might even try to reconstruct what has been lost."
	2	See below, p.70-71. Cp. Harold Osborne, <u>op. cit.</u> , p. 231: "A picture is a material thing only incidentally. As a work of art it is the enduring possibility for the actualization of a specific set of visual impressions... Thus a little thought serves to show that even when a work of art is not recorded but is embodied in a material medium, the material object is in no case identical with the work of art."
70	3	Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, 1946, pp.469-470. (See Ch. XV, "Esthetic Judgment.")
71	4	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.470.
72	5	<u>Ibid.</u>
73	6	<u>Ibid.</u>
	7	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.473.
74	8	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.472-473.
	9	<u>Aesthetics and Criticism</u> , p.230.
	10	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.229-230.
	11	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.230. If the word "most" has any meaningful function in this final sentence, Osborne must be understood to imply that <u>some</u> of the recordings exist prior to that which they record. It is not clear how that is possible.

Page	Note	
75	12	<u>Op. cit.</u> , p.473.
	13	<u>Op. cit.</u> , p.230.
76	14	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.231.
78	15	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.231-232.
79	16	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.230-231.
80	17	<u>Ten Composers</u> , Jonathan Cape, London, 1945, p.165.
84	18	<u>An Essay Toward a Theory of Art</u> , M. Secker, London, 1922, p.90. Cp. Margaret Macdonald, "Some Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts," in <u>Aesthetics and Language</u> , p.126: "Scientists observe and explain the behaviour of objects. Whether bodies are observed to fall by X in Italy in the sixteenth century or by Y in London in the twentieth does not affect the result, unless new facts are relevant." But the evaluations of certain works change from period to period, and this, Miss Macdonald thinks, is because "the work is what it is interpreted to be.... There seems to be no work apart from <u>some</u> interpretation." P.127: "The point is that there is no object which is 'the real' play or sonata which exists independently of any interpretation."
	19	<u>Art as Experience</u> , Minton, Balch, New York, 1934, p.64.
	20	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.162.
86	21	<u>Op. cit.</u> , p.94.
87	22	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.96. (The reader should notice Croce's use of the term 'truly real' in this passage. He may well wonder what is unreal about the activity which falls under 'd'.)
	23	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.8.
88	24	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.10.
	25	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.11.
89	26	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.112.



Page	Note	
90	27	<p><u>Ibid.</u>, p.116. The theoretical ground of Croce's defense of aesthetic activity against moral or practical judgement renders his defense useless. Since aesthetic activity is theoretical, he argues, and the work of art internal, a practical or moral judgement cannot be made either of this activity or of the work itself, but only of the willed activity (the action of recording the aesthetic activity in material form), which may or may not follow the inner, creative act; in other words, the thing made to record the work of art and to communicate the artist's creative (aesthetic) experience is subject to moral judgement; the work of art 'proper' is not. But it is always the thing made by the artist for the purpose of communication that is the object of moral judgement; the work of art as Croce understands it (being internal) being inaccessible for a judgement of any kind.</p> <p>Let us agree that the artist's intuition must be exempt from a practical judgement since it remains in the sphere of contemplation and does not involve an act of will, an action. We are still left with the problem of censorship. Are we to say that the inner, aesthetic activity is to be exempt from moral judgement but the created object, the product of this activity, subject to moral judgement? That would be to say that the artist can create (in Croce's sense) whatever he pleases, but that he can communicate only what morality approves.</p>
	28	<p><u>Ibid.</u>, p.97: "And what else are those combinations of words called poetry, prose, poems, novels, romances, tragedies or comedies, but <u>physical stimulants of reproduction</u> ...; what else are those combinations of sound called operas, symphonies, sonatas, or those combinations of lines and colours called pictures, statues, architecture? The spiritual energy of memory, with the assistance of the physical facts above mentioned, makes possible the preservation and the reproduction of the intuitions produced by man."</p>
	29	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.97-98.
91	30	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.118.
92	31	<u>Ibid.</u>
93	32	<u>The Principles of Art</u> , Oxford, 1938.

Page	Note	
93	33	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.36-37: "...we must disabuse ourselves of the notion that the business of an artist consists in producing a special kind of artifacts, so-called 'works of art' or <u>objets d'art</u> , which are bodily and perceptible things (painted canvasses, carved stones, and so forth). This notion is nothing more nor less than the technical theory of art itself. We shall have, later on, to consider in some detail what it is that the artist, as such and essentially, produces. We shall find that it is two things. Primarily, it is an 'internal' or 'mental' thing, something (as we commonly say) 'existing in his head' and there only; something of the kind which we commonly call an experience. Secondarily, it is a bodily or perceptible thing (a picture, statue, &c.) whose exact relation to this 'mental' thing will need very careful definition. Of these two things, the first is obviously not anything that can be called a work of art, if work means something made in the sense in which a weaver makes cloth. But since it is the thing which the artist as such primarily produces, I shall argue that we are entitled to call it 'the work of art proper'. The second thing, the bodily and perceptible thing, I shall show to be only incidental to the first. The making of it is therefore not the activity in virtue of which a man is an artist, but only a subsidiary activity, incidental to that. And consequently this thing is a work of art, not in its own right, but only because of the relation in which it stands to the 'mental' thing or experience of which I spoke just now. There is no such thing as an <u>objet d'art</u> in itself; if we call any bodily and perceptible thing by that name or an equivalent we do so only because of the relation in which it stands to the aesthetic experience which is the 'work of art proper'."
95	34	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.139.
	35	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.300.
	36	<u>Ibid.</u>
96	37	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.139.
97	38	The point has also been made by Paul Ziff, "Art and the 'Object of Art'," in <u>Aesthetics and Language</u> , pp.170-186. The argument of this

article, done with special reference to Samuel Alexander (and mentioning also Pepper, Collingwood, De Witt Parker, Bosanquet), is that the distinction between the physical object (e.g., a painted canvas) and the work of art ('aesthetic object') is a groundless distinction which arises from forgetting that different kinds of descriptive statements about art have different uses. For certain purposes, e.g., packaging, a canvas (painting) may be described as flat; for some other purpose, e.g. criticism, it may be described as having depth. These two apparently contradictory statements do not imply the existence of two objects, but only the necessity of different kinds of description, depending upon the purpose the description is intended to serve.

- 97      39      Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1949, p.9.
- 98      40      The same cannot be said of Pepper's other books on this subject. Formulating this same distinction in Aesthetic Quality (Scribner's, New York, 1937), Pepper is led to a view of aesthetic judgement quite like that held by Collingwood: pp.231-232: "In this manner, an aesthetic work of art is created out of a physical work of art. And the objective thing is not primarily the physical work, which as a physical continuity we can know only as a thin system of schematic relations. The primary objective thing is this imaginatively constructed work. It is this last, and this last only, that we judge aesthetically and call excellent, if we can." Even more pertinent here is the supplementary essay, "The Aesthetic Work of Art," appended to his major work in critical theory, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts (Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., 1946); in this essay, Pepper is exclusively concerned with finding out what is "the focus of aesthetic judgement and criticism." (p.143) He concludes, p.149, that "The actual aesthetic object for the practical critic or everyday spectator is not a physical object, nor an idea, nor even a single act of perception, but the intermittent cumulative succession of perceptions which we call the perceptive series." Dissatisfied with this presentation of his theory, Pepper elaborated it ten years later in The Work of Art (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1955). Here (p.13) he uncovers what he calls "a little nest of related

objects"; pp.30-31: "I showed the need of considering the thing we call a work of art as a nest of objects. I am in fact suggesting that it consists of three closely interrelated objects: First, the physical vehicle; second, the object of perceptual immediacy. These two objects within the nest of the total work of art we have so far been describing. The third which we now come to I shall call the object of criticism.

"The physical vehicle is the continuous enduring control object which is the source of stimulation for the succession of fugitive objects of perceptual immediacy. The object of criticism is some sort of synthesis or evaluative goal of the sequence of perceptual immediacies. The first object, the vehicle, is as enduring as the physical and cultural materials of which it is composed. The third object, the object of criticism, is equally enduring because it is in the nature of a potentiality or dispositional property of the vehicle. It is the full potentiality of aesthetic perception available to the aesthetic vehicle. But what connects the two and actualizes both for aesthetic appreciation is the sequence of perceptual immediacies stimulated by the vehicle. The second object is the actual object of immediate aesthetic experience." Many philosophers would grant Pepper's distinction between the physical object and the mental entity that comes into being during a spectator's perception of the object; and many might even allow him to call this second, mental entity (image, impression, sense datum) an object, even though this renders the term 'object' ambiguous. What is too misleading to be allowed is Pepper's suggestion that it is the second object that is perceived. Following up this suggestion, Pepper construes the object of critical judgment as a composite object made up of many objects of the second kind. Thus he contrasts the perceived picture with the picture actually painted by the artist, as if it were not what the artist made that is perceived.

P. Leen, "The Work of Art and the Aesthetic Object," Mind, N.S., Vol. XL, 1931, p.292: "The aesthetic object then is primarily imagined sound or colour or shape and only secondarily and subsequently sense-produced and sense-apprehended, while ordinary sound or colour or shape



is primarily sense-apprehended and only secondarily and subsequently given in imagination in the form of memory images. Thus the aesthetic object differs from the work of art, which also is primarily an object of sense-experience." How could this 'primary/secondary' distinction be applied to the experience of the spectator? Does the distinction refer to the temporal sequence or to what is first and second in order of importance? The first intention is suggested by the term 'subsequently'. But clearly the physical work of art must be an object of sense-experience before there can be any question of an imagination-produced aesthetic object. And if the notion of an imagined aesthetic object is admitted, there is no question of its being sense-apprehended in either a primary or a secondary sense. The second kind of distinction is equally futile if Leon wishes to maintain that both the senses and the imagination are involved in aesthetic experience - since both are necessary (according to him), there is no point in saying that one is more important than the other.

- 103      42      Abercrombie, op. cit., p.79: "The painter who knows his trade knows just what graduation of colour, what interrelation of masses and line - in brief, what design in detail and in whole - will, in their complex conjunction, rouse in those who receive them such feelings as he himself felt when he not only saw but spiritually exploited the landscape: and into that design he modulates what he saw." P.85: "The artist is the man who can find the symbolism which will indirectly, but as accurately as symbolism can, convey the whole intricacy of the experience acquired in conception; devising for that end complex associations of sensuous experience, which will reliably provoke in the recipient such mental and emotional reactions as will combine intricacy of experience similar to that which inspired the artist."
- 104      43      George Allen & Unwin, London, 1937, p.167.
- 105      44      Ibid., p.170.
- 45      The work of art, Miss Bartlett writes, p.205, "is an object which has come into being as the result of a specific activity on the part of the artist and which can be correctly understood only in relation to that activity. It is this which is the 'aesthetic object,' and although,

as has been indicated, it needs activity of mind on the part of the recipient for its full apprehension, it is not made by him, is not 'primarily imagined,' nor is it a fusion of mental and material. It is not simply an 'occasion' through which the recipient shares in some experience of the artist, but is something which must be experienced and valued in-and-for-itself, directly." However, Miss Bartlett's unwillingness to break with the notion of an aesthetic object prevents her in the end from allowing the work of art to possess in itself whatever value it may be judged to have. If the spectator fails to appreciate the value of a work of art, she says, pp.194-195, if "he fails to be moved, he thereby withholds from the work of art some character which it ought to have, or...he fails to bring the aesthetic object into being. What he does is to fail to apprehend what is really before him, and the fact that he can do so and yet still apprehend, apparently, the physical object, leads to the conclusion that, as G. E. Moore expresses it, beauty is not an intrinsic property in the sense that yellow is. If this conclusion is accepted it obviates the need for finding a specific property or properties in the work of art constituting its beauty." One wonders if the philosophers who solemnly report having failed to find a beauty property in a work of art really ever expected to find such a property, and if they supposed that those who have applied the term 'beautiful' to works of art meant to imply that such a property could be found in a work of art. Of course there is no beauty property in a work, a patch of beauty here and a patch of beauty there, that can be pointed out as a patch of yellow pigment can be pointed out, and the use of the term does not require that there should be. For the term is applied to the work as a whole, to a construction combining many properties, and it describes how in the speaker's opinion these properties have been combined. In short, 'beauty' is not used to denote a certain property in the work but to denote the work as being of a certain kind. To the curious objection that the value property, beauty, does not exist independently of the physical properties, pigments, e.g., it must be replied that neither does the yellow exist independently of the pigment. But it does not follow from that fact that the yellow is not there.



Page	Note	
105	46	Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1924.
	47	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.21.
107	48	<u>Ibid.</u> , footnote to p.20: "We can diagrammatically represent the delusion as follows. What actually occurs is that A, a work of art, causes E an effect <u>in us</u> , which has the character b; A <u>causes</u> Eb. We <u>speak</u> as though we perceived that A has the quality B (Beauty); we are perceiving AB; and if we are not careful we think so too. No one of our recent revolutions in thought is more important than this progressive rediscovery of what we are talking about."
	49	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.20.
109	50	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.21-22.
	51	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.23.
111	52	A. J. Ayer, for example, seems to be perfectly aware that no value feature exists independently of a physical feature. But he does not find in this situation a resolution of the logical difficulty which perplexes the relationship between the 'two kinds' of terms. Rather he finds in the inseparability of physical feature and value feature the source of the difficulty about the relationship between the two supposedly distinct kinds of terms. Since he insists upon a distinction between two kinds of terms and of statements which has no counterpart in the work of art itself, he is unable to discover either a factual or a logical connection between descriptive statements and value statements, and he therefore construes the latter as being of psychological import: "There is nothing that counts as observing the <u>designata</u> of the ethical predicates, apart from observing the natural features of the situation. But what alternative is left? Certainly it can be said that the ethical features in some way depend upon the natural. We can and do give reasons for our moral judgments, just as we do for our aesthetic judgments, where the same argument applies.... But the question is: In what way do these reasons support the judgements? Not in a logical sense. Ethical argument is not formal demonstration. And not in a scientific sense either. For then the goodness or badness of the situation, the rightness or wrongness of the action,

would have to be something apart from the situation, something independently verifiable, for which the facts adduced as the reasons for the moral judgement were evidence. But in these moral cases the two coincide. There is no procedure of examining the value of the facts, as distinct from examining the facts themselves. We may say that we have evidence for our moral judgements, but we cannot distinguish between pointing to the evidence itself and pointing to that for which it is supposed to be evidence. Which means that in the scientific sense it is not evidence at all.

"My own answer to this question is that what are accounted reasons for our moral judgements are reasons only in the sense that they determine attitudes. One attempts to influence another person morally by calling his attention to certain natural features of the situation, which are such as will be likely to evoke from him the desired response." ("On the Analysis of Moral Judgements," op. cit., p.175.)

The oddity of this position invites careful scrutiny. Although Ayer does not really believe that the work of art (no more than the moral situation) is constituted of two kinds of features, physical feature and value feature being inseparable in actuality, he never questions the legitimacy of the distinction between the two corresponding kinds of terms. He speaks of ethical predicates and descriptive predicates (value terms and descriptive terms) just as if moral situations (or works of art) were characterized by this duality. He finds that the descriptive terms refer to features that are manifestly present in the situation or work of art; since there is no other kind of feature left for the value terms to refer to, it is concluded that they cannot really be about the situation or work in the sense that the descriptive terms are. The possibility that the so-called value terms provide information of a special sort about the same features that the so-called descriptive terms refer to is not considered. From this oversight arises the illusion of a logical gap between statements with 'descriptive predicates' and those with 'value predicates'.

## Chapter 3

Page	Note	
121	1	<u>The Art in Painting</u> , Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1937, p.440.
124	2	<u>Principles of Art Appreciation</u> , p.261.
	3	R. M. Hare, <u>The Language of Morals</u> , pp.79-80: "...it is in fact the case - and this has been productive of logical confusion - that almost every word in our language is capable of being used on occasion as a value-word (that is, for commending or its opposite); and usually it is only by cross-examining a speaker that we can tell whether he is so using a word. The word 'brilliant' is a good example." Although Hare does not assume that any given critical adjective must always be either descriptive or evaluative, he does assume that in any instance of its use it must be either one or the other and not both - and this assumption has also 'been productive of logical confusion'.
129	4	<u>Ethics</u> , p.89.
131	5	<u>Aesthetic Studies</u> , Duke University Press, 1952, p.27.
132	6	<u>Ibid.</u>
	7	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.25.
	8	Lewis Mumford, <u>The Culture of Cities</u> , New York, 1947, p.408.
	9	Katherine Gilbert, <u>op. cit.</u> , pp.28-29.
135	10	Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1936, pp.148-149.
141	11	Quoted in Max Graf, <u>Composer and Critic</u> , Chapman and Hall, London, 1947, p.317.
142	12	Donald Francis Tovey, <u>Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in D Minor (op. 125)</u> , <u>An Essay in Musical Analysis</u> , Paterson, Edinburgh, 1922, p.28.
	13	Cp. C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, <u>The Meaning of Meaning</u> , Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1953, p.150: "The best test of whether our

use of words is essentially symbolic or emotive is the question - 'Is this true or false in the ordinary strict scientific sense?' If this question is relevant then the use is symbolic, if it is clearly irrelevant then we have an emotive utterance." This absolute disjunction between the 'strict scientific' use of words and the 'emotive' use is utterly groundless. That words are sometimes used in non-scientific contexts without the intention or the effect of expressing or arousing emotion is so obvious that one can only wonder how these two thinkers in collaboration managed to overlook the fact.

- 143      14      See, for example, Gilbert Seldes, "I am Here To-day: Charlie Chaplin," in University Readings, edd. Clarence D. Thorpe and Erich A. Walter, Harper, New York, 1931, p.215: "I recall, for example, an exquisite moment at the end of this film [His Night Out]. Turpin is staggering down the street, dragging Charlie by the collar. Essentially the funny thing is that one drunkard should so gravely, so soberly, so obstinately take care of another and should convert himself into a policeman to do it; it is funny that they should be going nowhere, and go so doggedly. The lurching-forward body of Turpin, the singular angle formed with it by Charlie's body almost flat on the ground, added to the spectacle. And once as they went along Charlie's right hand fell to one side, and as idly as a girl plucks a water-lily from over the side of a canoe he plucked a daisy from the grass border of the path, and smelled it. The function of that gesture was to make everything that went before, and everything that came after, seem funnier; and it succeeded by creating another, incongruous image out of the picture before our eyes. The entire world, a moment earlier, had been aslant and distorted and wholly male; it righted itself suddenly and created a soft idyll of tenderness." (From The Seven Lively Arts, Harper, New York, 1924.)
- 15      University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952. See pp.72-75. (Shumaker implies that whereas 'funny' is objective, 'amusing' is subjective. Might one agree, then, with Seldes (see preceding footnote) that His Night Out is funny, but disagree with the claim that it is amusing?)

Page	Note
152	16 R. M. Hare, <u>The Language of Morals</u> , pp.94-110. P. H. Nowell-Smith, <u>Ethics</u> , pp.164-165.
154	17 <u>Op. cit.</u> , pp.80-93.
	18 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.81.
	19 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.82.
156	20 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.84.
158	21 <u>The Foundations of Ethics</u> , Oxford, 1939, p.13.
	22 <u>Principia Ethica</u> , Cambridge, 1922, p.6.
159	23 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.16.
	24 "Is 'Goodness' a Name of a Simple Non-natural Quality?" <u>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</u> , N. S., Vol. XXXIV, 1934, p.255.
	25 <u>Ibid.</u>
	26 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.257-258.
161	27 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.258.
	28 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.259.
162	29 p.3.
	30 <u>Penguin</u> , 1949, p.16.
	31 <u>Ibid.</u>
	32 George Santayana, <u>The Sense of Beauty</u> , Scribner's, New York, 1896.
163	33 <u>An Essay Towards a Theory of Art</u> , p.33.
164	34 Ogden and Richards, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.140: "Yet, surprising though it may seem, the only author who appears to have expressly admitted this difficulty and recognized its importance is Rupert Brooke. 'One of the perils attending on those who ask "What is Art?" is', he says, 'that they tend as all men do, to find what they are looking for: a common quality in art.... People who start in this way are apt to be a most intolerable nuisance both to critics and to artists.... Of the wrong ways of approach- ing the subject of "Art," or even of any one

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art, this is the worst because it is the most harmful'." (From Rupert Brooke, John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama.) A little later, p.146, Ogden and Richards add: "For if we approach the subject in the spirit of a visitor to the Zoo, who, knowing that all the creatures in a certain enclosure are 'reptiles', seeks for the common property which distinguishes them as a group from the fish in the Aquarium, mistakes may be made. We enter, for example, Burlington House, and assuming that all the objects there collected are beautiful, attempt similarly to establish some common property. A little consideration of how they came there might have raised serious doubts; but if, after the manner of many aestheticians, we persist, we may even make our discovery of some relevant common property appear plausible."



## Chapter 4

Page	Note	
173	1	S. M. M. Furness, <u>Georges de la Tour of Lorraine</u> , Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1949, p.88.
182	2	P. H. Nowell-Smith, <u>Ethics</u> , p.36.
	3	Book 111, Part 1, Section 1; quoted in Nowell-Smith, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.37.
185	4	Nowell-Smith, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.45: "Many disputes, say the subjectivists, turn out to be disputes about the facts or about the validity of deductions made from those facts and our common ethical premises. But, they say, a point may be reached when there is no disagreement of a factual or logical kind; and yet a <u>moral</u> disagreement remains. You approve of one thing and I approve of another. And when this point is reached it is tautological to say that the dispute cannot be settled by <u>rational</u> argument." Cp. C. J. Ducasse, <u>Art, the critics, and You</u> , Oscar Piess, New York, 1944, p.116, and Arnold Isenberg (who discusses the syllogistic formulation of critical argument but does not consider it apt), "Critical Communication," in <u>Aesthetics and Language</u> . A. J. Ayer ( <u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.111, and "On the Analysis of Moral Judgements") and R. M. Hare ( <u>The Language of Morals</u> , pp.39-41) both demonstrate the invalidity of moral arguments when construed deductively and make clear that their arguments are intended to apply to critical discourse also.
186	5	"The Study of Poetry," in <u>The Great Critics</u> , edd. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks, Norton, New York, 1932, p.632.
192	6	<u>Ethics and Language</u> , p.267.
	7	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.146.
	8	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.267.
193	9	<u>Ibid.</u>
	10	P.15.
	11	<u>Ibid.</u>

Page	Note	
193	12	"On the Analysis of Moral Judgements," <u>op. cit.</u> , p.172.
	13	<u>Ibid.</u>
194	14	Pp.9-10. In the Preface, p.8, Carnap remarks: "Formulations which are more exact and therefore more suitable as a basis of argument may be found in my book <u>Logische Syntax der Sprache</u> ." I do not think that the longer, more difficult book requires any alteration of the following discussion of Carnap's view of statements made about the value of things. <u>The Logical Syntax of Language</u> is primarily concerned with scientific discourse and makes only a passing reference to discourse about value: "The supposititious sentences of metaphysics, of the philosophy of values, of ethics (in so far as it is treated as a normative discipline and not as psycho-sociological investigation of facts) are pseudo-sentences; they have no logical content, but are only expressions of feeling which in their turn stimulate feelings and volitional tendencies on the part of the hearer." (Kegan Paul, London, 1937, p.278.)
	15	"Meaning and Verification," in <u>Readings in Philosophical Analysis</u> , edd. Herbert Feigl and Wilfred Sellars, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1949, p.148.
	16	<u>Op. cit.</u> , p.14 (my italics).
	17	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.25 (my italics).
	18	<u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.13: "And now I can reformulate the principle of verification as requiring of a <u>literally</u> meaningful statement, which is not analytic, that it should be either directly or indirectly verifiable..." (My italics.) P.15: "...if one accepts the principle of verification, one must hold that his statement does not have any other <u>factual</u> meaning than what is contained in at least some of the relevant empirical propositions; and that if it is so interpreted that no possible experience could go to verify it, it does not have any <u>factual</u> meaning at all." (My italics.)
195	19	Arguing this position in an article entitled "Verification and Understanding," <u>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</u> , N.S. XXXIV, 1934,

Margaret Macdonald attributes the verificationist theory of meaning to C. S. Peirce. Agreeing with W. B. Gallie ("Peirce in the 1870's was teaching logic on lines which were eventually to reach Oxford some sixty years later" - Peirce and Pragmatism, Penguin, 1952, p.12), she remarks, p.143, fn. 1, that "it appears clear that Peirce anticipated many of the views of Wittgenstein and his followers," and quotes, pp.143-144, from an article contributed by Peirce to The Monist, 1905, p.162: "that whatever assertion you make to an empirical scientist he will either understand as meaning that if a given prescription for an experiment ever can be and ever is carried out, a given experience will result or he will see no sense at all in what you say'." (Cp. Collected Papers of C. S. Peirce, Vol. V, para. 464: "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object'." (Quoted in Gallie, op. cit., p.11.)

- 198      20      Presumably logic is also taken to be in some sense meaningful, since Carnap distinguishes it from metaphysics which he considers to be nonsense; but logic is not discourse about the physical world; rather it is about discourse itself. Nor is mathematics, which is not for Carnap nonsense either, a fact stating science; rather it is a formal one, consisting of definitions, and therefore exempt from the test of verifiability. Discussing the logical foundations of mathematics in The Logical Syntax of Language, Carnap says, p.326: "The formalist view is right in holding that the construction of the system can be effected purely formally, that is to say, without reference to the meaning of the symbols; that it is sufficient to lay down the rules of transformation, from which the validity of certain sentences and the consequent relations between certain sentences follow; and that it is not necessary either to ask or to answer any questions of a material nature which go beyond the formal structure."
- 21      Philosophy and Logical Syntax, p.13.
- 22      Ibid., p.14.
- 23      Ibid.

Page	Note	
198	24	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.15.
199	25	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.25.
	26	<u>Ibid.</u>
	27	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.22-26.
	28	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.24. Pp.24-25: "But actually a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form. It may have effects upon the actions of men, and these effects may be in accordance with our wishes or not; but it is neither true nor false. This is revealed as soon as we apply to such statements our method of logical analysis. From the statement 'Killing is evil' we cannot deduce any proposition about future experiences. Thus this statement is not verifiable and has no theoretical sense, and the same is true of all other value statements."
200	29	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.29.
202	30	Pp.40-41.
	31	See "Is 'Goodness' A Name of A Simple Non-Natural Quality?"
203	32	Olin Downes, <u>Symphonic Masterpieces</u> , quoted in <u>The Music Lover's Handbook</u> , ed. Elie Siegmeister, Morrow, New York, 1943, p.203.
205	33	As in the tentative and cautious analysis given by C. D. Broad in "Is 'Goodness' A Name of A Simple Non-Natural Quality?"
	34	P.5.
	35	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.31.
	36	<u>Ibid.</u>
	37	<u>Ibid.</u>
206	38	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.102-103.
	39	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.103.
	40	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.107.
	41	James Thrall Soby, "The Painting of John Marin," <u>Perspectives</u> , No. 11, Spring, 1955, p.51.

Page	Note	
207	42	"On the Analysis of Moral Judgements," <u>op. cit.</u> , p.179: "A valuation is not a description of something very peculiar; it is not a description at all." Cp. G. E. Moore, "A Reply to my Critics," in <u>The Philosophy of G. E. Moore</u> , ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, Northwestern University, 1942, p.590: "...in ascribing to a thing a property which is not a natural intrinsic property [e.g. goodness], you are not describing it at all..."
	43	<u>Language, Truth and Logic</u> , p.107.
	44	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.22.
209	45	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.113-114.
211	46	See Arnold Isenberg, "Critical Communication," in <u>Aesthetics and Language</u> .
213	47	In <u>Philosophical Analysis</u> , ed. Max Black, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1950.
215	48	"Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics," <u>op. cit.</u> , p.368.
	49	<u>Ethics and Language</u> , p.113: "The reasons which support or attack an ethical judgement have previously been mentioned. Subject to some exceptions that will be noted as we proceed, they are related to the judgement psychologically rather than logically. They do not strictly imply the judgement in the way that axioms imply theorems; nor are they related to the judgement inductively, as statements describing observations are related to scientific laws. Rather, they support the judgement in the way that reasons support imperatives. They serve to intensify and render more permanent the influence upon attitudes which emotive meaning can often do no more than begin."
216	50	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.345.
	51	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.348. (The subscript 's' (for 'simple') indicates that 'Q' stands for a quality of a certain appearance of a work of art and not for a property of a work of art, which is indicated by the subscript 'c' (for 'complex')). See p.347.)
	52	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.365-366.



Page	Note	
217	53	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.364: "We must emphasize the critic's decision partly for the reason just given: it directs his inquiries, giving his knowledge a special scope and organization. And we must emphasize it for this further reason: it helps us to see that his knowledge, however carefully selected and organized it may be, does not guide him with the impersonal demands of logic. Between his beliefs and his decisions (as we have previously seen) there is not a logical but only a causal, psychological relation. Hence his beliefs guide him in a way that permits his decision to be colored by his own individuality."
	54	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.353.
	55	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.365: "We have been led to these observations, it will be remembered, by questions about the meaning of certain terms, such as 'allegorical', 'unified', and 'beautiful'."
218	56	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.345.
219	57	According to <u>Ethics and Language</u> , the statement which expresses a value judgement is to be understood as the expression of approval or disapproval combined with an imperative: "I approve of this; do so as well" - p.21, <u>passim</u> - is the model - a model which, it must be observed, is developed, elaborated, qualified, and refined in the analysis for which it serves as point of departure. The statements which express the reason for a value judgement are about the facts of the case relevant to deciding about the value of something, i.e. relevant to deciding what attitude one should take toward it; these statements are straightforward descriptive statements, subject to the usual empirical tests. Thus Stevenson can conceive of an argument about the value of a thing in which a judgement is supported by pure statements of fact.
	58	"Interpretation and Evaluation in Aesthetics," <u>op. cit.</u> , pp.376-377 esp.
	59	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.342 esp.
	60	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.369 esp.
	61	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.374.
	62	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.382.



Page	Note	
220	63	Cp. Osborne, <u>op. cit.</u> , p.291: "...criticism <u>describes</u> works of art, but describes them in a special way, calling attention in its descriptions not to any and every characteristic which they possess but signaling those characteristics in virtue of which they are judged to be excellent or indifferent works of art. A person who describes the physical dimensions of a picture and the chemical composition of the pigments is not, for example, writing as a critic of painting; and one who comments on the binding and layout of a book is not indulging in literary criticism."
223	64	<u>Op. cit.</u> , p.158.
227	65	By now it must be clear that on my view critical statements are not distinguished from empirical statements by positing a special, non-observable kind of feature as their referents but by pointing to the difference in the kind of interest taken in objects by scientists and by critics of art.
228	66	Trans. Stuart Gilbert, Doubleday, New York, 1953.
	67	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.470.
	68	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.475.
	69	<u>Ibid.</u>
	70	<u>Ibid.</u>
229	71	<u>Ibid.</u>
230	72	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.480.
	73	<u>Ibid.</u>
	74	<u>Ibid.</u>
232	75	<u>Ibid.</u>

## Chapter 5

Page	Note
239	1 E.g., William Kneale, <u>Induction and Probability</u> , Oxford, 1949, Part IV, S. 42, esp. pp.223-224.
	2 Max Black, <u>Language and Philosophy</u> , Cornell, Ithaca, 1949, p.61.
240	3 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.62.
	4 <u>Ibid.</u>
242	5 <u>Time</u> , January 10, 1955, p.17.
244	6 P. H. Nowell-Smith, <u>Ethics</u> , Ch. I. (See pp.23-24 above.) R. M. Hare, <u>The Language of Morals</u> , p.29 esp. (See pp.39-46 above.)
	7 P.31: "A judgement is not moral if it does not provide without further imperative premisses a reason for doing something." The context warrants my substituting 'evaluative' for 'moral' in the text.
245	8 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.45: "It may be maintained that although, in the strict sense of the word, I have indeed shown that moral judgements and imperatives cannot be <u>entailed</u> by factual premisses, yet there is some looser relation than entailment which holds between them. Mr. S. E. Toulmin, for example, talks of: 'an ethical argument, consisting partly of logical (demonstrative) inferences, partly of scientific (inductive) inferences, and partly of that form of inference peculiar to ethical arguments, by which we pass from factual reasons to an ethical conclusion - what we may naturally call "evaluative" inference'." (See <u>Reason in Ethics</u> , Cambridge, 1950, p.38.)
	9 <u>The Language of Morals</u> , p.46.
	10 <u>Ibid.</u>
246	11 <u>Ibid.</u>
247	12 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.48: "The view which I am attacking holds that by having special rules of inference we can say that there can be inferences from a set of indicative premisses to an imperative conclusion."

Page	Note	
248	13	Donald Francis Tovey, <u>Some English Symphonists</u> , Oxford, 1941, pp.69-70. (The phrases in square brackets replace Tovey's code-letter references to excerpts from the printed score.)
253	14	<u>Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism</u> , Vol.VII, No. 1, September 1948, pp.42-48.
	15	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.42.
259	16	Quoted in <u>Composer and Critic</u> , p.253.
	17	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.252.
	18	<u>Ibid.</u>
260	19	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.253.
265	20	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.232.
272	21	<u>Ibid.</u> (For a treasury of such irresponsible music criticism see Nicolas Slonimsky, <u>Lexicon of Musical Invective</u> , Coleman-Ross, New York, 1953.)
274	22	<u>Aesthetics and Criticism</u> , pp.305-306.
	23	<u>Eight Victorian Poets</u> , Cambridge, 1930, pp.37-38.
275	24	Serge Diaghileff on <u>L'Oiseau de feu</u> , quoted in Serge Lifar, <u>A History of Russian Ballet</u> , Hutchison, London, 1954, p.269. Cp. Giorgio Vasari, whose critical comments are customarily deficient in descriptive information; see, for example, his remarks on Raphael in <u>Vasari's Lives of the Artists</u> , ed. Betty Burroughs, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1946, pp.229-230: "For these pictures [done for the palace of Agostino Chigi] Raphael prepared the cartoons and painted many of the figures with his own hand in fresco. The subjects were from mythology: a Council of the Gods, the Marriage of Psyche, Mercury with his flute, and a Jupiter of the most sublime dignity. The whole work, whether as painting or poetry, is eminently beautiful. Raphael caused Giovanni da Udine to surround it all with festoons of fruits and flowers. All is as beautiful as can be."
279	25	R. M. Hare, <u>The Language of Morals</u> , p.111.
285	26	<u>The Observer</u> , London, December 11, 1955.

Page	Note	
286	27	<p><u>Ibid.</u>, "'Simplicity, severity of form and economy in execution should be appropriate to Soviet architecture. Attractiveness in buildings should be achieved not through the application of ornate and extensive ornaments, but through the organic relationship of architectural forms with the purpose of the building...'"</p> <p>(Crankshaw is quoting from a bulletin, issued by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. and the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, in which "derivative traditionalism" is denounced in favour of the "functionalism" which Crankshaw advocates. Remarks concerning "formalism and cosmopolitanism" and Crankshaw's italics have been omitted.)</p>

## Chapter 6

Page	Note
290	1 <u>Aesthetic Studies</u> , p.120.
291	2 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.121.
	3 The ultimate grounds of critical judgements are here understood to be provided by aesthetic theory. See pp.343-351 below.
292	4 The paradoxicalness of this situation renders suspect the view that admits it as possible. Such is the nature of critical language that the features cited by a critic in support of his judgement will be denoted by terms of such evaluative force that another critic could not admit that he does not share his colleague's preference (or aversion) for features thus characterized without at the same time confessing the bizarreness of his taste.
293	5 Herbert Read, <u>The Meaning of Art</u> , pp.152-153.
294	6 Much the same material on definition, somewhat amplified, was published in an article, "The Descriptive Definition," in <u>The Journal of Philosophy</u> , Vol. XLIII, No. 2, January, 1946, pp. 29 ff. In this article Pepper is not primarily concerned with aesthetic judgement, but he does mention in passing, p.36, that "Only by means of a descriptive definition can value criteria be held responsible to empirical tests. For, as is now widely recognized, the basic criterion of evaluation in any field is a definition. If this definition is not responsible to the facts of the field, all evaluations in the field become utterly irresponsible."
	7 <u>The Basis of Criticism in the Arts</u> , pp.3-4.
	8 The criteria are formulated in <u>The Basis of Criticism in the Arts</u> as follows: Mechanism - "Things liked or disliked for themselves"; (p.44) Contextualism - "voluntary intuitions of quality"; (p.56) Organicism (objective idealism) - "the integration of feeling"; (p.77) Formism - "perceptions satisfying in themselves to the normal man." (p.107)
	9 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.18.

Page	Note	
295	10	<u>Ibid.</u>
	11	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.171.
	12	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.17.
296	13	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.22.
299	14	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.25-26. See Richard Robinson, <u>Definition</u> , Oxford, 1954, pp. 5, 39, 62-66.
	15	<u>The Basis of Criticism in the Arts</u> , p.27.
	16	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.27.
	17	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.29.
300	18	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.27.
301	19	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.30.
	20	1449 b. (Trans. S. H. Butcher, <u>Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art</u> , Macmillan, London, 1898, 2nd. ed., p.23.)
302	21	1451 b. (Butcher, p.37.)
	22	1452 a. (Butcher, p.41.)
303	23	1455 a. (Butcher, p.61.)
	24	1451 a. (Butcher, p.35.)
304	25	Cp. J. E. Spingarn, "The New Criticism," <u>American Critical Essays</u> , ed. Norman Foerster, Oxford, 1930, pp.444-445: "This idea was taken hold of by some of the German Romanticists, for the purpose of justifying the Shakespearean drama in its apparent divergence from the classical 'rules'. Shakespeare cannot be judged by the rules of the Greek theatre (so ran their argument), for the drama is an inevitable product of theatrical conditions; these conditions in Elizabethan England were not the same as those of Periclean Athens; and it is therefore absurd to judge Shakespeare's practice by that of Sophocles."
305	26	Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in <u>The Great Critics</u> , p.455.
306	27	<u>Ibid.</u>



Page	Note
306	28 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.456.
307	29 <u>Ibid.</u>
	30 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.455-456.
308	31 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.448-449.
310	32 Pierre Corneille, <u>A Discourse in the Purposefulness and the Parts of the Dramatic Poem</u> , trans. J. H. Smith, <u>The Great Critics</u> , p.675.
	33 In <u>The Great Critics</u> , p.310.
	34 <u>Ibid.</u>
	35 <u>Ibid.</u>
	36 <u>Ibid.</u>
311	37 Chatto and Windus, London, 1932, p.2.
	38 <u>Ibid.</u>
	39 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.2-3.
313	40 <u>Definition</u> , p.16.
314	41 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.16-17: "I now subdivide nominal definition into <u>word-word</u> and <u>word-thing</u> definition. The purpose of all nominal definition being to report or establish the meaning of a word or symbol, word-word definition does this in the form of saying that one word means the same as another word, and word-thing does it in the form of saying that a word means a certain thing.... Word-word definition correlates a word to another word, as having the same meaning. Word-thing definition correlates a word to a thing, as meaning that thing."
316	42 <u>Art</u> , Chatto and Windus, London, 1949, pp.7-8.
317	43 <u>Ethics and Language</u> , p.210. (As I mentioned earlier, Chap. 4, p.215, Stevenson habitually uses 'emotive' and 'attitude' where the terms 'evaluative' and 'judgement' might be expected. I have inserted the latter words in square brackets to ensure that the relevance of the quotation to the present discussion would be recognized.)

Page	Note
318	44 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.213.
	45 "The Study of Poetry," in <u>The Great Critics</u> , p.640.
319	46 <u>Ethics and Language</u> , p.210.
320	47 <u>Composer and Critic</u> , Ch. 5.
321	48 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.80-81. (From <u>Der Critische Musikus</u> , Hamburg, May 14, 1737.)
	49 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.70.
	50 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.76.
322	51 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.70-71.
	52 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.82-83.
	53 "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," ( <u>North American Review</u> , July, 1895), in <u>Major American Writers</u> , edd. Howard Mumford Jones and Ernest E. Leisy, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1947.
323	54 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.1283.
324	55 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.1284.
	56 <u>Ibid.</u>
325	57 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.1288-1289.
	58 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.1286.
326	59 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.1286-1287.
327	60 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.1289.
	61 <u>Ibid.</u>
329	62 <u>Ten Composers</u> , p.116.
	63 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.117: "But lyricism is a mode of feeling, not just a style of opera composition; all that happens in 'Pelléas', vocally and orchestrally, is infused with the feeling and therefore the style of lyric-drama. It is an odd thought - 'Pelléas', one of the few operas where recitative and melody are equally warmed by music, and it is impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins, this is the opera which has frequently been praised for everything except its sustained musical style."

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329	64	<u>Ibid.</u>
	65	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.116: "To be dramatic in Debussy's day meant that a composer was under an obligation to exploit the orchestral crescendo, and beat up excitement by mounting sequences. There are no peaks of orchestral climax in 'Pelléas'; no whippings-up of the nerves by repetition and acceleration. Hence we have been told that 'Pelléas' is not dramatic, except in a vague way that can be felt only if we react to the music in some tenuous and complicated state of our souls. If there is no palpable drama in the fact that Goloud, human and visible, is lost in Debussy's dim murmuring forest, then I do not know what drama is; we feel that he is being enveloped by strange forces that are about to change his destiny - his destiny here and now on earth, not in a metaphysical unknown or void. If there is no drama, palpable and of the theatre, when Debussy's music sends the frightened doves fluttering from the tower, I am at a loss to account for the pulsations of my imagination at this point of the score. I know few moments in opera more definitely dramatic than when Pelléas, at the approach of Goloud, ejaculates, 'Attends! attends!' and the orchestra palpitates in triplets - tympani triplets at that! and pizzicato. The crisis is all over within the space of a dozen bars; but its brevity only leaves the scene the more sharply etched. When Mélisande's hair tumbles from the tower over the face of Pelléas, all the violins - as I have said - fall down with it in golden tresses of tone, technically called chords of the seventh; is this not open and palpable drama and, like the music which tells us of the flash of Mélisande's ring into the fountain, is it not graphically dramatic, and in need of no equivocating allusions to 'Symbolism'?"
	66	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.117.
330	67	<u>Ibid.</u>
334	68	Cambridge, 1939.
335	69	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.20.
337	70	<u>Ibid.</u> , pp.33-34.

Page	Note
338	71 <u>Ibid.</u> , pp.20-21.
	72 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.35.
	73 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.16.
339	74 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.29.
340	75 <u>Ibid.</u>
341	76 <u>Ibid.</u> , p.21.
77	<p>See, for example, Theodore Meyer Greene, <u>The Arts and The Art of Criticism</u>, Princeton University Press, 1940, who claims that there is a "universal standard of artistic perfection," by reference to which appraisals of individual works of art must be made. One asks what would be the nature of such a universal standard when formulated? It would be a statement of those characteristics shared by all works of art of whatever kind which were perfect. Or rather, since Greene is reluctant to admit that any existing work of art can be certified as perfect, it would be a statement of those characteristics which would be shared by all works of art of whatever kind which were perfect if any such existed. If the standard is to be applicable to instances of every art form, its statement must not contain any reference to features of any one art form which are not shared by all the others. A standard expressed in terms of such gross generality is in danger of becoming a tautologous definition which is useless for critical practice. Greene does not survive this hazard in his chapters on "Artistic Quality and Perfection" (Ch. XXII, pp.389-423) and "Artistic Truth" (Ch. XXIII, pp.424-460): P.391: "Since every work of art is a unique solution of a unique problem, the critic must ask: How successfully has the artist solved his particular problem in this particular work of art? How appropriate is this specific form to the artist's specific intent? In this sense every critical judgement recording an appraisal of artistic quality is necessarily a singular judgement.</p> <p>"Finally, artistic quality is dependent upon certain universal conditions, and its appraisal necessitates an implicit appeal to a universal standard of artistic perfection. That this is the case can be shown both theoretically and</p>

empirically. Considered theoretically, the concept of artistic perfection is by definition a normative concept. This means that every appraisal of a work of art, though necessarily a singular judgement relating to the specific work of art in all its uniqueness, involves an appeal to a standard universally applicable to works of art as such. On the other hand, empirical analysis of the most diverse works of art reveals the fact that whenever artistic intuition discovers artistic merit in a work of art, the work in question is actually found to satisfy, in proportion to its artistic merit, certain determining conditions of artistic quality as such." Greene says that he is not attempting to define artistic quality, which is a simple and therefore irreducible notion, but is exhibiting its determining conditions. That is, he is stating the conditions which would have to be satisfied by any work of art of whatever kind which achieved perfection. It follows that if a critic is aware of these conditions, the satisfaction of which constitutes artistic perfection, and if he is able to assess the extent to which any particular work of art satisfies these conditions, then he will be able to appraise the artistic quality of that work with considerable assurance. But in order to assess the extent to which a particular work of art satisfies "certain universal conditions" it must be possible to state these conditions in such specific and concrete terms that it can be observed whether they apply or do not apply to the work in question. I do not think that it is possible to do this, for the requirement of universality is inherently incompatible with the requirement of specificity and concreteness. A statement of the universal conditions which novels and poetry, music, painting, sculpture, the dance, architecture, and drama would all have to satisfy in order to attain perfection must be couched in terms of such generality that it could never be decided with precision and finality by observation whether such terms did or did not apply to any particular work and therefore whether or not that work satisfied the conditions in question. The fact that when Greene attempts to exhibit these conditions his analysis degenerates into a parade of truisms and platitudes testifies to the impossibility of formulating any workable universal standard of artistic perfection such as he thinks is



necessary for the appraisal of artistic quality: P.392: "Whenever a competent artist warms to his work and prosecutes it with spirit and disciplined enthusiasm, the work of art itself bears the unmistakable marks of such effort. Whenever, in contrast, an artist lapses into mechanical passivity and works without imaginative concentration, his work will show a corresponding lack of vitality. A work of art which possesses artistic vitality moves us, if we are sensitive, to a correspondingly vital response, whereas, in proportion as it lacks artistic vitality, it 'leaves us cold' and fails to arouse us to artistically re-creative activity." P.399: "The extremes of artistic imperfection are not in themselves forces with a dynamic power of their own; they are merely states of imperfection. But they possess for the creative artist a perverse fascination, tempting him to favor now one and now the other to the detriment of his art. If he is to be successful in his creative labors, he must exert every effort to recognize them as states of imperfection, and to resist their psychological appeal: he must use all the artistic acumen and willpower at his disposal to achieve a clear apprehension of his artistic goal and to translate his insight into the sensuous pattern which it dictates. The more competent he is as an artist, the less will he be tempted by non-artistic extremes to which lesser artists so frequently succumb. But even the greatest artist, since he is a finite and fallible mortal, cannot hope to transcend the necessity for such conscious effort." P.413: "The mean of artistic excellence...involves choosing the right subject-matter and employing it in the right way according to criteria dictated by the expressive intentions of the artist." P.449: "Any organization of a primary medium must then be said to be artistically correct and felicitous in proportion as it effectively expresses, in an artistically satisfying manner, the ideas which the artist wishes to express."

Neither Greene's theoretical nor his empirical argument for their being an implicit appeal to a universal standard of artistic perfection involved in the appraisal of the quality of works of art is cogent. "Considered theoretically," he writes (p.391), "the concept of artistic perfection is by definition a normative concept." That is a correct analytical



statement. "This means," he infers (pp.391-392), "that every appraisal of a work of art, though necessarily a singular judgement relating to the specific work of art in all its uniqueness, involves an appeal to a standard universally applicable to all works of art as such." That is an empirical statement which asserts what is to be proved. The fact that the concept of artistic perfection is a normative concept does not entail the fact that all appraisals of works of art involve an appeal to a universal standard embodying this concept. The empirical argument (p.392) is no better. It claims that the "empirical analysis" (by which is meant 'observation,' presumably,) of works of art will show that these works each satisfy certain conditions in proportion to their respective artistic merits. This implies the possibility of determining a work's artistic merit by means other than a value judgement, namely by an 'empirical analysis' which discovers which conditions of artistic quality the work satisfies and to what extent. But such a 'discovery' would not result from an empirical analysis, for the question to be answered about a work's artistic quality is not a question of fact, to be answered by observation, but a question of value, to be answered by a critical judgement. If by "empirical analysis" is meant not empirical analysis in the ordinary sense but empirical analysis in an aesthetic sense, then it would be indistinguishable from the "artistic intuition" which discovers artistic merit in the first place, and therefore could not be considered an independent method of confirming artistic intuition's judgements. And even if the notions of artistic empirical analysis and artistic intuition could be sufficiently clarified to be distinguished, an artistic empirical analysis would be normative, not factual, involving a second judgement of value which would provide no evidence of the kind generally termed 'empirical'. And even if, as he claims (p.392) the possibility of determining by empirical methods whether and to what extent a work satisfies "certain determining conditions of artistic quality as such" is not denied, it is certain that no reliable estimate could be made on the basis of the formulation of these conditions which Greene has provided: P.418: "The distinctive mean of artistic perfection in these representational arts must be defined then, as a unified, original, and vital exploitation of both primary medium and

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representational subject-matter for the sake of artistic expressiveness." No empirical analysis could determine whether and to what extent this condition had been satisfied by a work of art.

345 78 Cambridge, 1937.

346 79 Ibid., p.205.

80 Ibid., p.221.

347 81 Ibid., pp.218-219.

82 Ibid., p.211.

348 83 Ibid.

84 Op. cit., p.144: Leavis says of a verse in Ezra Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley: "His poise, though so varied, and for all his audacities, is sure; how sure, nothing can show better than the pun in the last stanza of the third poem:

O bright Apollo,  
τίς γ' ἀνδρα, τίς ἥρωα, τίς α θεόν,  
What god, man, or hero  
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

In what poet, after the seventeenth century, can we find anything like this contributing to a completely serious effect (the poem is not only tragically serious but solemn). "Lucas quotes this verdict in the context of the discussion which I have been considering and offers a contrary judgement, p.207: "τίς γ' ἀνδρα" 'tin wreath' - the sort of joke made by preparatory schoolboys beginning Greek - 'sureness of poise' - 'not only tragically serious but solemn'! Solemn? - Yes. A belfry full of owls could not equal it. But, as wit, surely Slender himself would have found it a little thin?"

349 85 Aesthetics and Criticism. See above pp.74-80.

86 Ibid., p.291.

87 Ibid., p.293.

88 Ibid., pp.292-293.

350 89 Ibid., p.291.

90 See above, p.318.

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